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Hare's Further Vindication
of the Methodist Ministry

1816

John Hare
Author

R.D.S.

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A
FURTHER VINDICATION
OF THE
Methodist Ministry,
AGAINST THE
EXCLUSIVE CLAIMS
OF
EPISCOPAL ORDINATION :

IN
A Series of Letters,
ADDRESSED TO THE REV. C. W. ETHELSTON ;

BY EDWARD HARE :

OCCASIONED BY
ANONYMOUS STRICTURES ON THE AUTHOR'S FORMER
LETTERS, AND ON THE METHODISTIC SCHISM.

~~~~~  
Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our  
father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise  
up children unto Abraham.....MATT. iii. 9.  
~~~~~

MANCHESTER,
SOLD BY ROBERTS, THOMPSON, AND RICHARDSON : AND
BY T. BLANSHARD, CITY ROAD, AND W. BAYNES,
PATER-NOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1816.

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FORSHAW, PRINTER, LIVERPOOL.

Wes. 1323

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
LORD KENYON.

MY LORD,

THE lively interest which your Lordship has been pleased to take in this important controversy, and your condescension on a former occasion, encourage me to present to you this second vindication of a Ministry unjustly impugned.

Our first opponent made his appeal to your Lordship, introducing himself to your notice with a frank declaration of his inability to manage the impeachment, and thus recognizing your authority to nod assent to his confession, and to direct him either to withdraw the indictment, or to commit the cause which he had undertaken to more able hands. The subsequent consistency of his behaviour removes all suspicion of affectation, and affords the most satisfactory evidence of his unqualified submission.

Our new opponent, my Lord, has not done you the honour of an appeal, which could not be made with propriety, except in open court. It would appear officious in me, to decide whether this dereliction of the customary rules of fair and honourable litigation, proceed from a want of the genuine humility and profound submission of his predecessor,—an opinion

that the court has forfeited its prerogative by the uprightness of its late decision,—a fear of injuring his cause, by exposing certain peculiarities of his countenance,—or an assumed inquisitorial right to arraign, condemn, and execute the schismatics, ad libitum, without any personal responsibility. It is for you, my Lord, to inquire into the real cause of this contempt of established English forms,—this true Italian appeal from justice to the stiletto.

Having had reason to applaud, rather than to censure your Lordship's administration, we do not choose to offer to the court the indignity of an abrupt departure. But we humbly submit to your wisdom and your candour, whether it be not quite sufficient to have replied once to an anonymous accuser? If the prosecution be still protracted, it is to be hoped that the next advocate who shall be retained will be an honourable man; and we shall expect to see him “face to face.” Should he be a right reverend Bishop, he has only to declare himself, that he may be treated with that respect which is due to his character and his office.

I am,

MY LORD,

With increased confidence,

Your Lordship's humble,

And obliged servant,

The AUTHOR.

Liverpool,

May 13, 1816.

ERRATUM.

In page 47, line 34, for “persons,” read her sons.

LETTER I.

REVEREND SIR,

THE recent publication, by an anonymous writer, of Strictures on my Letters to you, and on what is gravely denominated the Methodistic Schism, has revived a controversy on the exclusive claims of episcopal ordination, which originated with you, and which many pious persons, both Churchmen and Dissenters, thought to have been concluded. The subject of that controversy is confessedly of such intrinsic importance, and so closely connected with the interests of religion, that I cannot entirely disapprove a further examination of it. When you had given one specimen of your best mode of conducting a polemical expedition, impartial men, and even some of your particular friends, having decided on your ignorance of the matter of discussion, on the weakness of your arguments, and on your inability to add any thing considerable to what you had there advanced, utterly despaired of your refuting the arguments with which you were confronted. No person expected, therefore, to see you again in the field of controversy. All parties will applaud the wisdom of your advisers who have pressed you to retire, and who, in conjunction with yourself, have sought out a more able advocate. You have not called in vain. A new man now succeeds you, if not in your honours, at least, in your labours, and has attempted to retrieve the cause in which you unhappily failed,—not for want of zeal, but of professional skill. The *triumph* which is thus decreed to you, is not such as renders it necessary that a slave be appointed to abuse you; nor will it conclude by your depositing in the capitol the trophies you have won:—but you are not without the hope of sleeping in a whole skin. Αντὸς φιλογονῶν ταῦτα μαχησταί.

When you handed your *excellent* Sermon, and my Letters in answer to it, to my new antagonist, he informs the world, that "at the same time an intimation was given, that the Letters were to be considered rather as a manifesto of Conference, than the production of the reputed Author."* I confess, Sir, that when your Sermon was handed to me, I received with it no intimation that it was the work of the bench of bishops: for no one ever suspected that any man of understanding had assisted you in the composition. But this introduction, I presume, is your successor's apology for your flight. You were put in extreme fear, and severely galled, and therefore imagined that, instead of one man, you had a whole regiment to encounter. This is satisfactory evidence of your being panic-struck; for the thing which in your disorder you merely imagined, was really impossible: no Conference having assembled between the publication of your Sermon and that of my Letters. This host of writers, Sir, is Edward Hare, *in propria persona*, who still keeps the field, but is too much honoured by the supposition that *two* men drove you from it. Let not your auxiliary plume himself, therefore, with the consideration that he has set his face against the armies of Israel; for it is *only* the stripping, with no other armour than his sling and his stone.

After such a humble retreat, and so satisfactory an apology for it, you possibly might have lived in tranquillity, if you had made two conditions with your successor: first, that he should defend your statements and reasonings,—and, secondly, that he should expose his own person to save yours. These are circumstances, however, which you seem to have forgotten. Instead of vindicating your Sermon, alas! he has almost entirely neglected it, as wholly unworthy of his notice, except where he has presumed to contradict you. As this cannot but be a source of great uneasiness to you, you have a right to complain, and will be justified in seeking redress the next time you publish. But this is not the worst of the business. While he leaves your Sermon and its author thus

* *Strictures*, p. 1.

exposed, and wounds you in several places, not always deservedly,—by concealing his name and his person, he leaves you only, who will always be deemed a party to the transaction, to answer for all his faults, and to bear all the consequences of his blunders.

On this condition, I chearfully forgive the unfairness with which he has interfered in a controversy where the parties concerned have already shewn themselves to each other, and shall not inquire whether he be a jew, a tark, or an infidel, or attempt to find out the probable causes of his concealment.— You have made yourself the responsible person by commencing the attack, and will continue so to be, as long as it shall be reiterated by those whom you employ. To you, therefore, I address myself.

I confess the satisfaction which I felt, when, perusing the Strictures of this anonymous author, I found him disposed to “discuss the point of schism only, without reference to tenets.”* I shall willingly take the hint, and attend to those subjects only which, in the commencement of the dispute, you introduced professedly.

I cannot help admiring the becoming modesty with which this anonymous writer introduces his work to our notice.. Conscious that he did not intend to answer my arguments, and convinced that

* This resolution of our Author is not without at least one exception. He professes himself led by “curiosity to know how I had answered some of Dr. Magee’s enquiries, particularly why Mr. Wesley has omitted (in his abridgement of the Book of Common Prayer) certain psalms and articles peculiarly relating to Christ, especially the article of Christ alone without sin, which omission Dr. M. brings as a proof that Mr. Wesley held the doctrine of sinless perfection. Why, also, if Mr. Wesley was orthodox, the Nicene and Athanasian creeds are omitted in his liturgy. But my letter to the Doctor (he complains) has given him no light on this subject.” He therefore supposes me “tacitly to allow that the Doctor’s Charge is unanswerable.” Strictures, p. 33. He ought to have taken notice that the edition of Dr. Magee’s work, to which I replied, was an earlier edition than that which he consulted, and that the Doctor adds to his stock of charges in every new edition. He would not then have been led into this error; for I noticed all that the Doctor had published at the time. As to Mr. Wesley’s orthodoxy, it must be observed, 1. That he intended an *abridgement* of the Prayer Book, and therefore must omit something. He is not the only churchman who has thought the church service too long, or who has disapproved its repetitions. If it were lawful, we might quote the opinion of an exalted personage

in fact he has not produced a refutation of them, he with great propriety gives to his lucubrations the title of *Strictures*. In the course of your perusal of them you could not fail to observe, that instead of meeting me fairly, and giving a satisfactory answer to the reasonings of each of my Letters, he has passed over the substance of them with perfect inattention, fixing only on a very few occasional remarks, which he represents as the best which the work affords. I do not mention this as matter of just complaint on my part; it is wholly your affair: and provided that the *Strictures* be not represented as a masterly refutation of my Letters, all the consequence will be, that it will cost me the less trouble to make good the arguments which I have already produced in our favour.

The grand design of your Sermon on the Unity of the Church, was to shew that the Dissenters in this kingdom, and the Methodists in particular, are guilty of a schism in the Church of Christ. To make good this allegation, you took for granted that the Church of England, as established by law, is that Church of Christ which in the first paragraph you called "his mystical body." Could this have been proved, it would certainly have been just to infer, that so far as they are guilty of a schism in the

in his vindication. 2. Mr. W. wished to omit every thing of a disputable kind. 3. The article of "Christ alone without sin" was omitted, not because Mr. W. doubted whether every man (Christ alone excepted) is born in sin, but because he believed the possibility of being "made (i.e. set) free from sin:" (Rom. vi, 18.) in other words, he believed and preached the doctrine of Christian perfection. 4. If our Author is not mistaken "the Church of England imposes on her members no other terms of communion, than an acknowledgement of the *apostles' creed*, and obedience unto God's commandments." Stric. p. 83. If this be the case, Mr. W. was a very good churchman, for he did acknowledge and publish the *apostles' creed*. Is not one creed enough, especially if it be that of the *apostles*?—And why should a Nicene or an Athanasian creed, or the creed of any man, or of any council, be added to it? 5. Although Mr. W. in his own opinion did acknowledge the doctrine of the glorious Trinity, and even wrote in its defence, he perhaps did not approve of the manner in which it is illustrated in those creeds. In his sermon on that subject, he says, "It was in an evil hour that these explainers began their fruitless work. I insist upon no explication at all; no, not even on the best I ever saw; I mean, that which is given us in the creed commonly ascribed to Athanasius. I am far from saying, He who does not assent to this, "shall without doubt perish everlastinglly." For the sake of

former, they are guilty of a schism in the latter. In answer to this heavy charge, I undertook in my first Letter to shew, that the Church of England is not the identical Church of Christ. There were two ways in which your second ought to have refuted me: by shewing either, that there is no such distinction as I have supposed between the mystical body of Christ, and the church established in this country, —or, that, however they may be distinguished, a separation from *you* involves the same guilt as a separation from our Lord and his apostles. But which, soever way he turned, he must infallibly meet with insuperable difficulties. Instead, therefore, of adopting either of these legitimate modes of reasoning, he very sagely remarks, I “have so entangled the subject, that it would be in vain attempting to unravel it after me.”* If you will take the trouble of once more reading that Letter, you will soon, I am sure, perceive what good reason he had for this confession. The argument of it is yet to remain unanswered, and in all its strength. But, as he must touch upon something, he does not pass over this part of my tract without one objection, the shrewdness of which you cannot fail to admire. “Every theological student knows, that in using the word church, we should distinguish whether the visible church universal be

that and another clause, I, for some time, scrupled subscribing to that creed; till I considered, (1) That these sentences only relate to wilful, not involuntary unbelievers: to those who having all the means of knowing the truth, nevertheless obstinately reject it; (2) That they relate only to the substance of the doctrine there delivered; not to the philosophical illustrations of it. 6. I hope these two creeds are not the infallible test of orthodoxy. If so, what must be done with those clergymen who never read them, and with Bishop Tillotson and others, who “wish they were well rid of them?” Burnet’s Hist. of his own times, vol. vi. p. 1418. For my own part, I candidly confess there are some things in them, much more difficult to digest than any thing I find in my bible. If Mr. Ethelstone, however, thinks he can vindicate them, he has a fair opportunity, as Mr. Grundy has made a severe attack upon them, which no one has attempted to repel. I protest I would have answered his objections to them, if I could have done it: but I really found myself unable. Nor would I have made this confession, if I had not been driven to it. I hope I shall be permitted to keep my objections to them within my own bosom; because those creeds are identified with that scriptural doctrine which I heartily embrace, and which I have once endeavoured to defend.

* Strictures, p. 3.

meant, or the invisible church, or any particular national church."†

Can you, Sir, suppose that this is designed for any other purpose than to reprove your gross mistake in confounding the invisible Church of Christ with the visible and national Church of England, and to confirm all the arguments by which I had endeavoured to distinguish them? Is not the distinction on which he insists the very thing to which I had been calling your attention, and which you had so grossly neglected? Why, Sir, he has quoted the very words by which I had pointed out the difference, and has concluded with the following quotation from my Letters: "When you stumble at the threshold, and mistake the *visible* Church of England, and its political union and secular government, for the *mystical* Church of Christ, and its evangelical union and spiritual government, no wonder that you go on blundering through the whole of your sermon."||— You see, Sir, that he had not passed over the distinction which I had taken some pains to enforce, and therefore that he could not mean to charge me with the neglect of it.

Instead, therefore, of replying to the arguments by which* I wished to prove to you the difference between the Church of Christ, and that of this country, by shewing, either that my assertions are false, or, that my inference is unjust, he grants the facts on which I argue, and draws from them his own conclusion! "According to this (says he) the Church of England is quite a different thing, and even no part of the Church of Christ."† Now, Sir, I thought it necessary to infer only, that though some members of the Church of England form a part of the Church of Christ, the whole of our national establishment, including all its parts, and considered as an establishment, is not included in the church which Christ has instituted.

To disprove the scriptural notion, that the Church of Christ consists of his truly pious followers, in all ages, and in every place, that is, "of all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord,

† *Strictures*, p. 5. || p. 9. * *Letters*, p. 7. † *Strictures*, p. 6.

both theirs and ours," you asserted, that "an heterogeneous mixture of all denominations, separatists of every jarring connection, cannot be deemed the true Church."‡ This assertion, I thought, if it proved any thing, would conclude against the Church of England, which is full of sects of every character, and of every opinion. I therefore argued, *ad hominem*, that the Church of England cannot be the true church, because "an heterogeneous mixture of all denominations cannot be the true church."§ Now, this gentleman does not pretend to deny the fact, that the Church of England contains all the sects; but he denies that "the mixture of sinners (and sects, he should have added) does not unchurch that society.* Here, Sir, I must continue my "interrogative mode of argument, which leaves him uncertain as to the real opinion of the questionist,"|| and ask, *When doctors differ, who shall decide?*

We have still another instance in which your friend has betrayed you. In distinguishing between the Church of Christ and that established in this country, I had specified that "the latter may by and by fall, and, in the end, certainly will: but against the former the gates of hell shall never prevail."† By this scriptural test of the Church of Christ, he did not care to try his *alma mater*, and therefore gives up the point, by conceeding that "she has fallen once," and "she may fall again." And lest this should not appear with sufficient evidence, he reminds you that "the signs of the times point thereto, and some of her faithful members think they have discovered as much in her prophetic writings."¶ Thus has he, with great care, corroborated my opi-

* Our Author confesses that the decay of discipline in the church is one of the grand causes of the multiplication of sects. But his mode of apologizing for it is somewhat curious. "To excommunicate a drunkard, or fornicator, would be only inducing him to add schism to his other sins." (Stric. p. 7.) This is the reason why the drunkards and fornicators, as well as the atheists, continue to be acknowledged as members. It is to preserve them from becoming dissenters: this last being the worst of all sins, not excepting even the murder of one's mother, which he has taken care to mention. I will not comment on this. Let us wait the issue.

‡ Sermon, p. 7. § Letters, p. 8 || Strictures, p. 6. † Letters, p. 7.

¶ Strictures, p. 9.

LETTER I.

nion, to your confusion. You are comforted, however, with the assurance that "fall when she may, she will be defended by her sons (*vi et armis*) unto the latest hour, and lamented by her survivors for ever."§ And a Romanist has the same consolation: for when "Babylon is fallen, that great city! that mighty city! the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more."

The text which you undertook to handle, inculcates a unity among Christians of the most important nature: a unity of mind, judgment, and doctrine. Instead of dwelling on this, you made it your business to urge a mere external uniformity. In remarking on you here, I said, "The sacred writers inculcate a unity of judgment and affection; they require us with one mind and one heart to glorify God: but you weary yourself in enforcing a mere external uniformity. The society of Christians should have but one soul: but you insist that we should all wear a cloak of one cut and of one colour, which will equally cover a saint or a sinner—a sincere Christian or a wicked hypocrite."* The observation was evidently meant concerning your sermon: where-as he supposes it to be levelled at the church. This Sir, was his mistake; for I believe the church requires of its members something more than external uniformity: though that is all it requires to constitute them members. But he, through the force of habit, passing over what is most excellent in the church which he defends, seems to plead guilty to a charge we did not intend to allege: and, in reply, attempts to fix the same, or a worse charge, on the Methodists. But here, Sir, is a gross error; for, in the first place, the Methodists do not insist upon an external uniformity, as the condition on which a person may become a member of their society: much less do they insist upon external uniformity only. "There is one only condition previously required in those who desire admission into these societies, a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins. But wherever this is fixt in the soul, it will be shewn

§ Ibid. * Letters, p. 13.

by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, First, by avoiding evil in every kind, Secondly, by doing good, and Thirdly, by attending upon all the ordinances of God."* But this is not all the difference between you and those whom he attempts in vain to recriminate. You insist on an external union with you, as necessary to salvation ; whereas the Methodists believe that "he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, (of whatever sect) is accepted of him."†

I shall not notice, directly, his long discussion of the subject of toleration. Thanks be to God and to our governors ! it is all mere *brutum fulmen*, and can hurt no one. It only adds one more opportunity to express the high sense which we have of the liberal conduct of the government of this empire towards us, and our hope that the high-church party will never have more power allowed them than to roar and shew their decayed and broken teeth. None but these will complain like our author, that with a constitution after the apostolic model, supported by twenty thousand learned and authorized clergymen, favoured by the prejudices of the people, and by so many laws, independently maintained by the expenditure of so large a portion of the national wealth, and enjoying the exclusive approbation and blessing of heaven, "the church of England is at present actually the suffering party."‡

My third Letter discusses the necessity of human learning, in a minister of the gospel. "But the question is so diffusedly, so jesuitically considered, that he can hardly be certain of what opinion the writer is."§—A plea of ignorance is often a very convenient one ! Why has he attempted to answer what he could not understand ? But it will appear

† Our author has cited a passage from Mr. Wesley, on what he is pleased to call the evils produced by Methodism. *Strictures*. p. 10. Whether he have made some mistake in giving the reference, or from what cause, I cannot tell, but I am not able to find it in any of the editions of Mr. Wesley's sermons, which I have an opportunity of examining : and, therefore, shall take no notice of it. Viewed in the light of the context, I doubt not that it would appear with a quite different aspect.

* Rules of Society. ‡ *Strictures*, p. 20. § *Strictures*, p. 21.

he did understand, that however *desirable* human learning may be in a minister of the gospel, it is not absolutely necessary. He understood, that among other arguments which I used in favour of my opinion, I appealed to the Book of Homilies; for he says I conclude with a tale from the Homilies. The “tale from the Homilies,” as he affects to call it, was cited in proof that an illiterate teacher is sometimes the most successful: and the *tale* proves this, if it proves any thing. What then is to be said of it? Oh, says he, that tale “is, in fact, taken from Eusebius, who relates it of those times when the extraordinary powers of the Holy Spirit were supposed not to be withdrawn.”†—Not to insist on the difficulty of proving that the extraordinary powers of the Holy Ghost were not yet withdrawn in the time of Eusebius, how will you account for this circumstance, that “one silly soul of no learning, should do that which many bishops of great knowledge and understanding were never able to bring to pass:” to convert a proud infidel philosopher? Why were not the bishops able to accomplish this? Were they not duly authorized? Had they not been episcopally ordained? Were they not of the apostolic succession? Had they not had the imposition of hands, by one who, duly authorized, had said, “Receive the Holy Ghost, for the office and work of a bishop in the church of God, now committed unto thee?”‡ And was this “poor simple man with small wit and less knowledge” either bishop, priest, or deacon? Had he been ordained by imposition of hands? And had he then received either the ordinary or the extraordinary powers of the Holy Ghost, so as to be able to convert a sinner whom the bishops could not convert? What! Sir, was the power of the Holy Ghost denied to the learned bishops, and yet given to a man who was neither truly learned, nor duly authorized? To repeat your own question, “Is the inspiration of the Spirit given to the unlearned layman, and denied to the lettered clerk?” And is this fact asserted in your own Homilies, which you have subscribed as containing “a godly and wholesome doctrine?”

† Strictures, p. 21. ‡ Consecration of bishops.

What then is become of the unparalleled power of learning, and the exclusive claims of episcopal ordination? But we will not urge this any further. I therefore add: 1. That the same Homilies assert, as you have seen, that "the revelation of the Holy Ghost, inspireth the true meaning (of the scriptures) unto them that with humility and diligence do search therefore;" and 2. The homily concludes this "tale" with that just observation, "So true is the saying of Bede: Where the Holy Ghost doth instruct and teach, there is no delay at all in learning." And these two passages, as they shew what application they intended to be made of the "tale," sufficiently assert what it was my intention to prove.

But whatever the Homilies assert, and how often soever you may have subscribed them, our author cannot away with this presumption. Hence, when Mr. Wesley says "I am bold to affirm, that these unlettered men (the Methodist preachers) have help from God for that great work, the saving souls from death;" and in another place, "I am persuaded every one of our lay preachers has an extraordinary call,"—he avers, "To claim inspiration would approach to blasphemy."* This is not the only place in which he speaks thus; and therefore this cannot be a mere slip of the pen. In another part, he says, "Since no such inward call was here vouchsafed, it is surely little less than blasphemy to pretend to it now."† I do not need to remind you that this man has, in the very same paragraph, been imputing even the extraordinary powers of the Holy Spirit, "to a poor simple man, who was reputed among the learned as an idiot;" and now, "to claim even ordinary inspiration, would approach to blasphemy." But may I ask, Does he mean to say that you were a blasphemer, when you declared in the presence of the people, "you trusted that you were inwardly moved with the Holy Ghost, to take upon you the office and ministration," of which you now make your boast? Were you a blasphemer when you joined with the bishop in singing,

Come Holy Ghost our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire. .

* Strictures, p. 23. † Strictures, p. 43.

*Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost thy ser'n-fold gifts impart:
Thy blessed unction from above,
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.
Enable with perpetual light
The dullness of our blinded sight:
Anoint and clear our soiled face
With the abundance of thy grace?*

And was the bishop too a blasphemer, when he not only claimed inspiration, but claimed a ministerial authority to bestow it, and said to you, “Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God?”—Truly, Sir, if we proceed at this rate, we shall multiply blasphemers beyond all reasonable measure. I will affirm, however, that if this anonymous author be himself a clergyman, he is himself a blasphemer, self-condemned, and one who might well conceal his name. And a man of this stamp, who enters into the church by an acknowledged blasphemy, ought never to complain of the treatment with which he meets from the populace; for if he avoid contempt it is more than he has a right to expect. The priests of Baal were honourable men in comparison with such; for they seem, at least, to have been sincere.

But he has not quite finished this business. In answer to that passage from the homily, entitled, a fruitful exhortation to the reading and knowledge of the holy scriptures, which asserts, that “man’s human and worldly wisdom or science is not needful to the understanding of scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence do search therefore;”—he observes, “that the homily declares learning to be *necessary* for a right understanding of the scriptures, and therefore directs the unlearned how to act when they meet with difficulties. ‘For either God will send him some godly doctor to declare unto him the true sense of scripture, or else, if we lack a learned man, to instruct and teach us, yet God himself from above will give light unto our minds, and teach us those things which are necessary for us, and wherein we be ignorant.’”* See, Sir,

* *Strictures*, p. 25.

how admirably you are defended. The point to be proved is, not that learning is a very valuable acquisition, and may be used with considerable advantage in the study of the scriptures ; for that is readily granted ; but you are to demonstrate from the Homilies that it is necessary, absolutely necessary. And how is this proved ? 1. The homily “ *absolutely declares learning to be necessary for a right understanding of the scriptures, and therefore directs the unlearned how to act when they meet with difficulties.* ”* That is, learning is absolutely necessary : but there is one way, here pointed out, in which the unlearned may understand the scriptures without it : Very good !—2. “ *For either God will send him some godly doctor to declare unto him the true sense of scripture, or else, if we lack a learned man, to instruct and teach us ; yet God himself from above will give light unto our minds, and teach us those things which are necessary for us, and wherein we be ignorant.* ”† So we shall be instructed in every thing necessary without either learning or learned men ; and, therefore, —learning is absolutely necessary. Better and better !—3. And in another place “ *Chrysostom saith, that man’s human wisdom or science is not needful,* ” &c. But why this &c.? Is it to hide the truth from us ? The homily says, that “ *man’s human or worldly wisdom or science is not needful to the understanding of scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence do search therefore.* ” That is, human learning is *not needful* ; therefore it is necessary ! Q. E. D. Most certainly the best proof of all ! No more needs now to be said to convince us that learning is absolutely necessary.

He has, however, one shift. The homily “ *plainly and distinctly intends, that to a teacher of others, a godly doctor, learning is necessary.* ”‡ Where, Sir ? I find no such plain and distinct intention. If there be, however, such an intention, point it out to me. In the mean time, I ask, 1. Whatever be the advantage of learning, how can it be absolutely necessary for a teacher, who with humility and diligence seek-

* *Strictures*, p. 25. † *Ibid.* ‡ *Strictures*, p. 26.

ing in the scriptures their true meaning, receives it by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost? What can be absolutely necessary for a teacher of others, more than a knowledge of the true meaning of the scriptures? Does not the homily itself commence with the assertion, that "there is no truth nor doctrine necessary for our justification and eternal salvation; but that is or may be drawn out of that fountain and well of truth?" 2. Have we not just seen that the inspiration of the Holy Ghost fits a man to be a teacher, and a successful teacher too, much better than learning: and that "a poor simple man, reputed among the learned as an ideot, did that which many bishops of great knowledge and understanding were never able to bring to pass," because, as Bede says; "Where the Holy Ghost doth instruct and teach, there is no delay at all in learning?"

There is another thing, Sir, which our author understood from my third Letter; viz. that many of the clergy are not possessed of that learning which they boast, and which they so confidently assert to be necessary for every teacher: and, what is still worse, that many more of them are destitute of that which is most absolutely necessary for them, biblical knowledge. In proof of this, I gave several specimens of your own ignorance of the bible: and your friendly advocate has not been able, nay, has not attempted in one single instance, to say any thing in your vindication. I appealed to the ignorance of the clergy in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and to the Preface to the Book of Homilies, which asserts that "all they which were appointed ministers, had not the gift of preaching sufficiently to instruct the people." I quoted Mr. Wesley, who well knew the ignorance of many of them. And what answer have we to all this? The question of the necessity of human learning in a minister of the gospel, "is accompanied (says he) with some sarcasms from Wesley, on want of learning in the clergy."[†] And then, to prove how learned the clergy are, it is stated, that "all the fathers of the reformation in this country were learned men, and two-thirds of the subscribers to the new edition of

† *Strictures*, p. 21, .

Stephens's Thesaurus, an expensive and learned work, are clergymen."‡

We grant, Sir, the learning of our reformers, and shall rejoice when their sons imitate them. But what has this to do with the learning of all the rest of the clergy? And what proof is it of their being very learned, that a few of them have money enough to purchase a learned and expensive work, and have the honour of being enrolled in the list of subscribers? However, as Mr. Wesley's words pass only for sarcasms, and you are determined to prove that learning is a pretty general thing among you, I shall cite the authority of one whose statement you cannot controvert. Let the world hear the learned and pious bishop Burnet!

"Our ember weeks are the burden and grief of my life. The *much greater part* of those who come to be ordained, are ignorant to a degree, not to be apprehended by those who are not obliged to know it. The easiest part of knowledge is that to which they are the greatest strangers; I mean the plainest parts of the scriptures, which they say in excuse for their ignorance, that their tutors in the universities never mention the reading of to them; so that they can give no account, or at least a very imperfect one, of the contents even of the gospels. Those who have read some few books, yet never seem to have read the scriptures. Many cannot give a tolerable account even of the catechism itself, how short and plain soever. They cry and think it a sad disgrace to be denied orders, though the ignorance of some is such that in a well-regulated state of things, they would appear not knowing enough to be admitted to the holy sacrament."

"This does often tear my heart. The case is not much better in many, who having got into orders, come for institution, and cannot make it appear that they have read the scriptures, or any one good book, since they were ordained, so that the small measure of knowledge upon which they got into holy orders, not being improved, is in a way to be quite lost; and then they think it a great hardship

‡ *Strictures*, p. 21.

if they are told, they must know the scriptures and the body of divinity better, before they can be trusted with a cure of souls. These things pierce one's soul, and make him often cry out, Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest. What are we like to grow to? In what a case are we, to deal with any adversary, atheist, papist, or dissenters, or in any sort to promote the honour of God, and carry on the great concerns of the gospel, when so gross an ignorance in the fundamentals of religion has spread itself so much among those who ought to teach others, and yet need that one teach them the first principles of the oracles of God?"*

In the time of Edward VI. "the greatest part of the country clergy could do little more than read."†

I make no comment on these passages, but give them as an apology for Mr. Wesley and others, who, when duty called on them, have faithfully resisted the exclusive claims of these ignorant clergymen, that have not prudence to avoid provoking a discussion of their own merits.‡

One of the principal objects of your Sermon was, to shew the indispensable necessity of ordination, without which the discharge of ministerial duties is unauthorized. In opposition to this opinion, I undertook, in my fourth Letter, to shew, that however proper ordination may be in a well-regulated Christian society, for the preservation of good order, it has not been accounted absolutely necessary. Here, as was expected, it is allowed, that parents, masters, and others, may without ordination teach their children, domestics, and pupils,§ Perhaps you are not aware what this concession implies: that the right to teach does not necessarily come by human ordination, but is a gift of God, to be used according to his direction and command, whether men approve or not. But it is added: "The quotations from scripture are not more to the purpose. In none of them was the pub-

† One of the passages which our author professes to have cited from Mr. Pawson's sermon was never written by him; nor did he ever intend any such thing. I suppose it to have been borrowed from the Anti-jacobin Review.

* Preface to the third edition of a discourse on the pastoral care.

† Burnet's Hist. of the Reformation, vol. ii. p. 202. § Strictures, p. 27.

lic service of the temple, or church, in the contemplation of the writer.”*—Was it necessary, Sir, that public preaching should be in the temple, or what you now call the church? Did the Jewish prophets always teach in the temple? Had the apostles and first Christian teachers always a consecrated place in which to preach? Surely then, the circumstance of unordained persons teaching in either the temple or the church, is not necessary to form a precedent for a man’s teaching who affects neither the one nor the other. However, if that circumstance be of so much importance, you will find that some of the cases which I have mentioned are quite in point. I named “the scribes of old, who were the ordinary preachers among the Jews, and who were not priests; they were not better than laymen. Yea, many of them were incapable of the priesthood, being of the tribe of Simeon, not of Levi.”† Yet these sat in Moses’ seat: and when our Lord was hearing them, it was in the temple. I mentioned also “our Lord himself, to whom, though he was not a Levite, even they who did not acknowledge that he was sent of God in an extraordinary character, never objected his want of human authority.”‡ And did not he often preach in the temple? To his example I added that of the apostles also, who were neither priests nor Levites, and to whom this was never objected. And did not they also teach in the temple? In respect of preaching in a church, a place consecrated for Christian worship, you must prove that there were such places in apostolic times, before you require us to prove that persons unordained were permitted to preach in them. Did not St. Paul admit, that in such places as the Christians used for their public worship, “they *all* might prophesy?”§ But I mentioned Calvin,—the laymen who promoted the reformation,—candidates for deacon’s orders in Sweden, Germany, and Holland,—our parish clerks,—laymen in our cathedrals,—and Dr. Atwell. And pray, Sir, have none of these men been permitted to officiate in “the public service of the church?” You see, Sir, how much truth there is in this sweeping assertion; and how

* Strictures, p. 27. † Letters, p. 35. ‡ Letters, p. 36. § 1 Cor. xiv. 31.

miserably it is substituted for sound argument, or plain matter of fact!

It appears, however, from our author, that we have all this time been wide of the mark. The question is not, may an unordained person edify his neighbours by public teaching; but, "whether every man is authorized to give the sacraments."* But I ask this gentleman's pardon:—that is not the question. I have never asserted that *every man* is authorized even to preach the gospel. The assertion which I undertook to maintain, is—"that every man who *understands* and *practises* religion, has, *under God*, a right to teach it *to as many as are willing to learn*."[†] You will mark, that the universal terms, every man, are limited by three conditions. 1. That he be a good man, who understands and practises what he is to teach. For as he cannot teach religion who does not understand it, so "to the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" 2. That he has a right to teach it only to those who are willing to learn, to whom, therefore, it may be necessary that he should give some proof of both his ability, and his fitness. 3. That he has this right under *God*, by whom it is given, restricted, enlarged, or taken away, as seems him meet. And since it is given to him only by God, no man can give it, if God refuse it. And if God give it, no man, or number of men, can have a right to take it away, while God prolongs it. God has given to every such person authority to teach religion privately, and no man has a right to deny it to him. And God gives authority to some men to teach religion publicly, and "what is any man that he should withstand God?" It is true, a man may be greatly assisted by the countenance and the prayers of his brethren; and therefore, in a regular society, it is reasonable that they should examine, and, if they approve, acknowledge, one who thinks himself called to labour in that society; and their accrediting him may be necessary to his becoming one of them. But if not, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto him, and "woe is he, if he

* Strictures, p. 27.

[†] Letters, p. 33.

preach not the gospel." They can only acknowledge the authority which God has given, and assist and encourage him to obey the call of God ; but it is not in their power to give that authority, if God have denied it.

Now, the proper question is, whether a man who is thus authorized to preach the gospel, have authority also to administer the sacraments, notwithstanding he is not specifically ordained for that purpose. You will understand me, Sir ; I do not mean that he has authority to do it in a disorderly manner. Your curate may have no right to supersede you in ministering the sacraments ; and yet you allow he has divine authority to do it under your direction. Just so, I affirm, every one who is called of God to preach the gospel, has divine authority for ministering the sacraments, when circumstances render it convenient and necessary. You will agree that this is the question. Why then does none of you cite the scriptures which specifically testify that ordination is necessary to the right administration of the sacraments? Why do not you demonstrate from the new testament that a particular order of men are exclusively appointed for this purpose? Why do you not prove that an unordained person is prohibited ministering those ordinances, or that a Christian is forbidden to receive them at his hands? Why do you not shew that there ever was a man who was called to preach, but who had not authority to minister the sacraments when the occasion required it? Is it possible that ordination is absolutely necessary to the validity of the sacraments, and yet you have not one single passage to produce out of the whole book of Christian revelation to prove it? Under the Jewish law, no man was permitted to touch the holy things unless by express appointment ; " no man taketh this honour upon him, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." But this was not left to be guessed at, or to be inferred : it was matter of most specific and repeated appointment. It is true, you endeavour to make up out of the Jewish code what you think so very deficient in the Christian law ; but that cannot be allowed. We have already shewn that the Jewish priesthood is not the proper exem-

plar of the Christian ministry ; but a figure of the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

You will now inquire, But how do you prove the lawfulness of the administration of the sacraments without ordination ? I answer, I found it entirely on the authority to preach the gospel. If I have proved that ordination is not necessary in the one case, I have equally proved it in the other. He that is sent of God to do the work of the ministry, is sent to do the whole work of the ministry, as far as his abilities permit and circumstances require: not indeed in contempt of his superiors, but under their direction ; for “ God is the God of order.” And how do you make up your minds to think otherwise ? Why, by supposing that the ministration of the sacraments is a work more sacred than the preaching of the gospel. But what scriptural authority have you for this opinion ? None at all. The whole tide of scripture, as far as it compares these things together, is against you. Jesus Christ himself was a preacher ; “ howbeit, Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.”* Paul was a preacher ; yet he said, “ Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.”† Persons of inferior importance might do that comparatively inferior office ; but it required the best abilities of Paul, to do the superior. Yet Paul did baptize when there was occasion, though that was not his grand commission. That authority to baptize accompanies authority to preach the gospel, is however sufficiently obvious from the terms in which our Lord gave a commission to his disciples. “ Go ye (said he) into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature : he that believeth and is baptized, (he that receives my doctrine from your lips, and my baptism from your hands) shall be saved.” Again : “ Go disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” This authority to administer the sacraments, is, from the very nature of the case, combined with authority to preach the word ; for preaching and the administration of the sacraments are but two means of attaining the same end. In the one case the minister instructs

* John, iv. 2.

† 1 Cor. i. 17.

by words, in the other by actions. "To administer a sacrament is by the outward word and element to *preach* to the receiver the inward and spiritual grace of God."†

If you say, But in all this argument you make no mention of the administration of the Lord's supper. How does it appear that all who have authority to preach have authority also to administer that holy ordinance? I answer by asking another question: How does it appear that any man has authority to administer it? Our Lord gave commandment to his disciples to receive the elements in remembrance of his passion; but he gave no directions concerning the persons who were to administer it. It is true, as the master of the feast, he himself administered it, and therefore his example is universally followed: the principal person in every Christian assembly officiates on that solemn occasion. But how will you prove that that principal person must of necessity be ordained?

I am not yet convinced that I made any mistake in asserting that our church admits of lay baptism. It is very well known, especially among the clergy, what was Sir J. Nichols' decision in the case of Wicks. The latter, "a clergyman of the church," refused to inter with Christian rites, a child which had been baptized by a dissenting minister: and the judge declared that that clergyman was obliged by law to read the service, as over one that was baptized. It avails not to say that, "an appeal would have been made if Wicks had not died." If Wicks had lived, an appeal might have been in vain. But Wicks died, and therefore it is now the law, that baptism by a dissenting, and therefore (in your sense) unordained, minister, is to be allowed by every clergyman to be good and valid.

But your friend has discovered that I am inconsistent with myself, and exultingly announces, it appears from my fifth Letter that "by the Methodists too, an examination, probation, and ordination are practised, and held necessary."* Not so necessary

†Biddulph's Baptism a Seal of the Christian Covenant, p. 27—30.

* Strictures, p. 29.

that they account a man a sinner before God who saves a soul without them. The Methodists do not think examination, probation, and ordination necessary, to give divine authority to minister in holy things, but to ascertain, if possible, and then to acknowledge, the authority which God is supposed to have given, that the person so ordained may be at liberty to labour with them, and may be accredited by them. This, therefore, is no contradiction.

We are now come by an insensible transition to the consideration of my fifth Letter. In that I took some pains to shew, 1. That whereas you make much ado about *ordination*, as if it implied some religious rite, the words of scripture which are so construed by you, generally mean no such thing, but an appointment, or election: 2. That these appointments, (call them ordinations, if you please) were made sometimes with, and sometimes without, the imposition of hands: 3. That the imposition of hands was not intended to convey authority to minister in holy things, but rather those ministerial gifts which prepared the person receiving them for the work to which he was appointed: 4. That the imposition of hands does not appear to have been ever practised in apostolic times, by persons who were appointed bishops of local, or diocesan churches, and who were of an order superior to presbyters: And 5. To make this the more plain, I shewed that bishops and presbyters were not only of the same order, but identically the same persons.

As these topics are the most important of any which have come into the present discussion, I supported each of these propositions by a candid and thorough examination, I believe, of all the scriptures which relate to them. If my new antagonist intended to confute me, it was his business to examine these arguments more than any other; and to shew either that I have misrepresented the meaning of scripture, or that I have argued from it unfairly. Instead of this, however, he has passed over these arguments as if he had never seen them.* It is true, he leaves

* There is one objection introduced incidentally by our author, on which I ought to remark. I thought I had cited good authority for translating the word *χειροτοναστες*, (Acts xiv. 23.) not ordained,

the general subject for a subsequent discussion, to which we will by and by attend. But as that is rather a political discussion than an examination of the scriptures, I cannot do justice to the cause which I have advocated without reminding you that the substance of this Letter is untouched, and leaving the religious public to divine the reason for an omission consigning to us the perfect and undisputed possession of a series of arguments, which, if they are not invalidated, must of necessity more than counterbalance a thousand volumes on the other side of the question.

Having established, as I supposed, my third proposition, that the imposition of hands was not intended to authorize a ministration in holy things, but rather to convey those ministerial gifts which prepared the person receiving them for the work to which he was appointed,—I thought it fair to infer, that “no bishop, no ordination, no imposition of hands, can give to one who still has no ability for that work, authority to preach : or confer on an unconverted and wicked man, authority to minister the sacraments.” † Of such a doctrine you had formed no conception ; but you had said something which militated, not directly, but indirectly, against it. You had stated, that “it is a fundamental error to conceive that clerical holiness is indispensably requisite to give validity to the administration of either baptism or the Lord’s supper.” To illustrate this doctrine you quoted Archdeacon Dau-

but chose. He thinks he has found good proof that it means the rite of ordination or consecration, and in support of his opinion, quotes the native historian of Antioch, who says, that the apostle Peter *χειροτονεῖσθαι*, consecrated Ignatius. Which quotation, says he, by the by, obviates the foolish and groundless distinction made by me in p. 42, Letters, between *χειρόθεα* and *χειροτονεῖσθαι*, Strict. p. 55. To this I reply : 1. Our author produces no authority for his own translation, which is perfectly arbitrary. So because he chooses thus to translate the word in one place, it must of necessity be translated in the same manner, by all other persons, and in all other places. 2. When Luke was said (2. Cor. viii. 19.) to be *χειροτονηθείς*, chosen of the churches, must we say he was *consecrated* by the churches ? Did the churches consecrate him a bishop ? And did our translators give us a “foolish and groundless” translation ? 3. Is this gentleman’s *ipse dixit* to outweigh the testimony of Parkhurst, Scovelius, and Schleusner, and of all the classical authorities to which they have appealed, who all decide point blank against him ?

† Letters, p. 48.

beny, who says, "There is an holiness of office independent of the holiness of the minister; the former being essential to the validity of the ministerial act, is on that account not to be dispensed with; whilst the latter only recommends and adorns it."

Now, Sir, I did not inquire how far the holiness of the minister is necessary to the validity of the ministerial act; but since the authority of an unholy man to minister in holy things is supposed to be founded in a distinction between the holiness of the office, and the holiness of the minister, I felt, as I still feel, disposed to controvert the distinction. I grant, Sir, that this man ministers in holy things. If he read the book of God to his congregation, he reads a holy book, containing holy truths, by which a believing hearer may possibly be sanctified and saved, notwithstanding the unholliness of him that reads it. If he minister baptism and the Lord's supper, he ministers holy rites, by which the recipient, if rightly disposed, may be benefitted: i. e. may renounce the devil and all his works, and spiritually eat the flesh, and drink the blood, of Christ, and consequently live by him, even when the minister is a perfect stranger to every thing but the external sign. This effect of his ministrations I called the *validity* of them: the word however was not mine, but yours. I said, "perhaps the validity of the truth of God, and that of the Christian sacraments, depend rather upon the disposition of the recipient, than of the minister." I am well aware that you and I differ widely on the nature and effect of saving truth, and of the Christian rites. But I did not think it well to introduce a controversy on that subject without necessity: and therefore took up your phrase "the validity of the ministerial act," without any explanation. And what says my new opponent? "Now what could have induced you to use such blasphemous expressions? Do you really believe that the validity of the truth of God depends on the dispositions of man?"* Now, Sir, look into Johnson's dictionay, and you will find that the word *validity* sometimes means, force to convince; and the adjective, *valid*, means efficacious. And does not the efficacy of the truth of God depend often on the disposition

* Strictures, p. 30.

of man? "Go ye, said Jesus, into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." In his sense, perhaps, the validity of the truth of God does not depend on the dispositions of man. "Let God be true and every man a liar." But in my sense it does.—Still, Sir, I say, that this validity (or efficacy may we call it) arises not out of the holiness of the office of the minister, and any consequent authority which he has to officiate. I utterly deny that any one can be holy as a minister, who is not holy as a man. To be holy, is to be devoted to God. But no man can be really devoted to God as a minister, who is not personally devoted to him. To be devoted to God as a minister, must imply that he aims at promoting the glory of God, which cannot be the case with him who as a man is devoted wholly to the world, the flesh, and the devil. He may perform the ministerial act: but in so doing "he serves not our Lord Jesus, but his own belly," his own ambition, or his own vanity. No, Sir: this distinction between ministerial and personal holiness, is mere priestcraft, popery, and deceit. It was invented when true religion was banished, to serve the selfish purposes of designing, hypocritical, worldly, ambitious, and wicked, priests, and to enable them more easily to blind the consciences, and enjoy the property, of the ignorant and irreligious multitude, and to maintain the dignity of their order. His holiness the pope and the conclave of cardinals best know the advantages which are derived from it. But the Christian world may most devoutly deprecate the re-admission of it in any of the reformed churches. Now, Sir, while I deny the holiness of a minister who is an unholy man, of course I still deny the authority of a wicked clergyman, either to take the covenant of God into his lips, to baptize, or to consecrate the sacred elements. I dare not, however, suppose, that the effect of the truth or of the ordinances of God depends absolutely upon the character any more than upon the authority, of the minister; but on the faithfulness of God, and the pious disposition of him who receives them. What are my objections to

the ministrations of an impious hypocrite, you have already seen.

After this insignificant skirmish, in which my main body has never been charged, I proceed with him to the sixth Letter. This also will receive very little harm from his attack. Your Sermon insisted on the regular, uninterrupted, succession of episcopal ordinations from Christ and his apostles, to our present English bishops. On this succession you made your own priestly authority, and the salvation of your flock, absolutely dependant. Such a delegation of authority necessarily descended through the Romish church, and all its abominations. You had your choice, however, whether to trace the succession through the popes of Rome, or from the foundation of Christianity in this country. The former your friend rejects, and thus evades all the difficulties of tracing the succession from St. Peter, to the bishop of Rome, and through the line of the popes. He chooses rather to suppose that episcopacy in this country had a different origin. It, therefore, rested with him to prove, in opposition to Bede, and and yet from Bede himself, that Aidan and Finan who, until the princes of the northern nations made them bishops were no more than presbyters, were consecrated bishops by such persons as his system allows to have episcopal authority. Finan, for good reasons, he has left still a presbyter. But who made Aidan a bishop? You shall now hear. "That Aidan was only a presbyter, seems a conclusion too hastily drawn from Bede. He says that the abbot of Dearmach, although only a priest, contrary to the usual practice, presided over the bishops of the adjoining province; (which by the by, proves that he had bishops about him.). He had already observed that A. D. 565, Columbanus set out to instruct the highlanders; the lowlanders having been instructed by bishop Ninias, long before. Now it is expressly said, that Aidan left this monastery where the abbot presided over the neighbouring bishops, having first accepted of the rank of bishop, when Segenius was abbot. Segenius did indeed send Aidan; but that he ordained him bishop, *there is not the slightest hint*, and we must conclude him to have been ordained by the bishops of the province, according to the usual

custom, nothing to the contrary being even hinted?"*

Now, Sir, you will not need to look any farther for a proof of the genuineness of English episcopacy. You perceive, in the first place, that in the primitive days "a priest presided over bishops." Here is satisfactory evidence, that in those days, as in the primitive church, a presbyter or priest, was of the same order as a bishop, and that though some presbyters were styled bishops, because they had a particular church to superintend, while those who had no such appointment, were only styled presbyters, this made no difference as to their order; for how could a presbyter preside among bishops if he were not at least their equal? How then is it to be proved that the presbyter Aidan was a bishop? I should infer that he became a bishop by taking a charge, and not by receiving a higher order from those with whom a presbyter was already equal. Our author thinks, however, that without "the slightest hint" of his consecration, "we must conclude him to have been ordained by the bishops of the province, according to the usual custom." That is, we are to conclude so because we find no such thing. Such are the proofs of the genuineness of English episcopacy!

But still he urges, that "popery, by its intrusions afterwards, did not destroy a regular succession here."† This, Sir, is an assertion, which if it could be made good, I confess would go far to support the cause of English episcopacy, provided you can make out the regularity of the uninterrupted succession. It would then avail nothing what persons have been bishops, nor could it be objected to you, if Satan himself had worn the mitre. But then the consequence is, that it infallibly carries us back to the church of Rome, from which some of us have conscientiously separated, and against the antichristian errors of which we have solemnly protested. It is true indeed, this does not appear a great evil to most of your high-church party, who have always felt a warm side for the scarlet lady, whom they *piously* acknowledge to be the mother of them all. As you

* Strictures, p. 32. † Strictures, p. 31.

profess yourselves protestants, at least pro tempore, I shall still argue with you as if you were sincere.

1. You maintain on the one hand that the uninterrupted succession of the priesthood by episcopal ordination is essential to the existence of the church of Christ, to the validity of her ordinances, and therefore to the salvation of her members: and on the other hand that "popery by its intrusions afterwards, did not destroy a regular succession here." If the intrusions of popery could not destroy a regular succession here, it could not destroy it at Rome. The consequence is, that the church of Rome was and is a true church of Christ; your separation from it is a schism; and no protestant, whether churchman or dissenter, at home or abroad, is a member of the true church, but a schismatic, and consequently in a state of condemnation. The pope's anathemas are just and valid, and you have no mean of escaping the damnation of hell, but by reconciling yourselves to the papacy, and returning to the bosom of the church. Now, Sir, call in a third man to assist you to avoid the consequence.

2. But how will you reconcile this doctrine with your own? You inform us that "when you separated from the church of Rome at the reformation, you separated from a church which had *ceased to be apostolic.*"* Cannot you see how unceremoniously your friend leaves you in the mire? So far from vindicating your schismatical doctrine, he sets himself pointedly against it. If the Romish church ceased to be apostolic, what was it but the intrusions of popery which destroyed the true apostolic succession?

3. How will you reconcile this new doctrine with that of your own church? You will easily remember, that by a quotation of a long and judicious passage from your own homilies, I shewed you that the church of England asserts and proves the church of Rome not to be even a part of the true church of Christ, and that it is not built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.† This argument concluded against the church of Rome equally at Rome

* Sermon, p. 17. † Letters, p. 66, 67.

and in our own country. Why then has not your friend pointed out my error, and that of your own church? Some shrewd men will think that we are the "true churchmen" and you the dissenters.

4. And how will you reconcile this doctrine with the scriptures? I thought I had proved, that the pope is the man of sin, and the church of Rome, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth:[‡] You were therefore called upon to shew, that the church of England is "the woman clothed with the sun and having the moon under her feet, upon whose head is a crown of twelve stars: the woman that once fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days."^{||} Instead of giving such an account of yourselves, you still insist upon it that she sprung from the very bowels of the "great whore," "the mother of harlots and abominations," and that she owes her existence to "the man of sin."

Truly, Sir, the church of England has no reason to thank such defenders for their labours. She has taken some care not to leave her sons to trace their origin from so filthy a source, and to teach them to derive their authority, not from the abandoned family of him that sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God, and who exalteth himself above all that is called God and is worshipped; but from him that sitteth in the heavens. While she regards herself as a revival of the Christianity of the purer ages, she claims her authority immediately from the skies. Hence, to avoid all objections from Rome, and to escape the censure of an illegitimate succession, she requires every candidate for her orders to affirm, that "he trusts he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him that office and ministration, to serve God for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people."^{*} Thus she vindicates all her sincere and pious pastors, from the popish charge of a devil-invented schism, and rests their authority, not on a fanciful, uncertain, and exploded succession, but on the call of God; and

[‡] Letters, p. 68, 69. || Rev. xii. 1, 6. * The ordering of deacons.

leaves the hypocrites to seek refuge in Romish superstition, and to perish with Babylon in their unrepented “blasphemies.”

When your vindicator (whom I am now able to convict as a presbyterian papist) begins his review of my sixth Letter, he says, “And now a few observations relative to popish ordination will carry us to the end of the *seventh Letter*.† That is to say, having slightly touched the sixth Letter, the seventh shall be passed over, unregarded. Sir, I do not complain. It was perfectly right. My seventh Letter purported to be a reply to most of your best arguments in support of the exclusive claims. It was prudent to leave it untouched; for he knew that whatever he can say for himself, he can say nothing in favour of your arguments.

And now, Sir, we have reviewed the reviewer, who very simply acknowledges that “he has only taken notice of some extraneous matters, to prevent interruption in his subsequent discussions.”‡ You are left without a vindication, and my Letters remain unanswered. If you cannot satisfy yourself with this consolation, you are quite at leisure to repent that you did not select a more faithful friend, or make better conditions for yourself, when you resigned your office to your successor.

I am, REV. SIR,

Yours, &c.

EDWARD HARE.

Liverpool,
Dec. 26, 1815.

† *Strictures*, p. 31.

‡ *Strictures*, p. 34.

LETTER II.

REVEREND SIR,

AFTER a short interruption, we again sit down to consider the arguments of my new opponent, and to inquire with what success he has vindicated the exclusive claims of episcopal ordination. As he totally disapproves your mode of conducting the controversy, and thinks that I, on my part, have studiously evaded the real difficulty, he enters upon a new series of arguments, in which he "endeavours to establish the following points: 1st That the constitution of the church is necessarily episcopal.—2nd. That the episcopacy of the church of England is on the apostolic model.—And therefore, 3dly, That all separation therefrom is schism."*

When a master comes we are soon taught to bow. You see, Sir, here is a man who knows what he is about, and begins his work *secundum artem*. Each of these points is to be handled separately and distinctly: and it will soon appear who is in the right. With so able a leader we chearfully follow. The first thing to be done is, to prove that "the constitution of the church is necessarily episcopal."

But here, Sir, unhappily, our first movements are made in some degree of confusion. That the constitution of the church of Christ is *episcopal*, we readily grant. But what does our author mean by the word? Do not you perceive, Sir, how much ambiguity there is in this proposition? The word *επίσκοπος* (*episcopos*) means a superintendant, or overseer: or, adopting the Greek word into the English language, a bishop. And who denies that the primitive churches were governed by bishops? Is not every church governed by a bishop? and are not all churches episcopal?

* Strictures, p. 39.

Is not every presbyterian pastor a bishop ?† Is he not an overseer of the church which he governs ? Is not every minister of an independent church a bishop ? Are not the elders of the Society of Friends bishops ? Do they not superintend the societies under their inspection ? And are not the superintendants in the Methodist connexion bishops ? Do they not superintend their helpers, and the societies which are placed under their care ? At this rate, if you use the word in its scriptural sense, and are so understood, you may rest from your labour as soon as you please : we are all convinced already. No wonder that your advocate proceeds so swimmingly on this topic. Wherever he can find a bishop mentioned, he imagines he has found a case perfectly in point. But he ought to have attended to his own complaints, of the want of distinction. He cries out that we have not fairly met the difficulty, and in fact manages to evade it completely himself. He should have attempted to prove, if that were not too hard a task, in opposition to the statements which I have given, and to the scriptures by which I have supported them, that the order of bishops and that of presbyters, were distinct : that a bishop is of an order superior to a presbyter, and has authority to ordain, whereas a presbyter has not : and that an ordination by a presbyter or presbyters is invalid. I shall thank you, Sir, to keep this in view, in the course of the subsequent examination.

† "The Puritans in the sixteenth century, were not so averse to the name of bishop, or his superintendance, as to the pomp, and wealth, and political engagements, of the prelacy: for as yet, the English bishops claimed not their office by divine right, but under the constitution of their country ; nor pleaded for more than two orders of apostolic appointment, bishops and deacons. See Burnet's history of the Reformation, voi. i. p. 324. Bishop Bancroft widened the breach, in the year 1588, by asserting in a sermon preached at Paul's cross, that bishops are a distinct order from priests, and that by divine right: and archbishop Whitgift supported his assertion. This tended further to irritate, as the archbishop and his associates refused to consider any as invested with the ministerial character, who were not episcopally ordained, and demanded of those who had been set apart in the reformed churches, to be re ordained before they were permitted to minister in the church of England. This offended the whole body of the reformed churches abroad, as well as the puritans at home."

Dr. HAWES.

With this exception he begins his argument like a logician who intends to examine every step which he takes : and therefore carefully defines his terms. The question is, What is this *church* the constitution of which is necessarily episcopal? You very justly stated that “ by the church you understand, a building fitly joined together, and compacted, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.”† And you added, “ The apostle therefore speaks of holding the head, from which the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increase with the increase of God.”|| This scriptural statement which, in the simplicity of your heart, you presented as descriptive of the constitution of the visible church of Christ, gave me a considerable advantage over you. To avoid falling into the same difficulties, he has taken care not to touch any of the arguments which I had founded on your concessions, and has given another and a very different account of the visible church. “ The visible church universal is (now) a society of men incorporated by baptism in the name of the ever blessed Trinity, for a purpose assigned and with appointed institutions—and is governed by persons possessed of powers delegated to them by the head and founder of the society while on earth.”* That this definition of the church is admirably adapted to the purpose for which it was fabricated, is undeniable. But, Sir, you must allow, that it differs widely from that which you found in the New Testament. If this man is right, you must be altogether in an error. Nay, and the church of England too ; for her article states, that “ the visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered, according to Christ’s ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.”† To this definition we have no objection ; but it would not serve the turn of my opponent, who takes care to exclude the character of its members, (“ faithful men” or believers;) and the important circumstances of “ the preaching of the pure

† Sermon, p. 7. || Sermon, p. 7. * Strictures, p. 40. † Article xix.

word of God, and the due administration of the sacraments according to Christ's ordinance," which would have unchurched the Romanists, and must have destroyed the episcopal succession. So it appears that neither you, the reformers, nor the apostles, rightly understood the constitution of the visible church of Christ. Had you, Sir, been in possession of this new definition, without any aid from either the New Testament, or the Book of Common Prayer, you might have met all your enemies in the gate. Having *imprudently* given your opinion in scriptural language, you furnished me with proofs that the church of England is not the visible church of Christ: and thus acquitted of a sinful schism, those you intended to condemn. Whereas, had you been furnished, like your friend, with a proper definition, you might have foiled us all. You might then with him have added, "National churches are parts of this society, divided from each other by distance of place, or political regulations."* Do not you see, Sir, how you come at once to your conclusion, that the church of England is a part of the visible church universal: and this merely by a developement of the definition? This, however, is not the only advantage to be derived from such an easy definition. I shall recommend it as "the church-man's *vade-mecum*," adapted to every latitude, and fitted to every meridian. If you travel into Scotland, and, leaving the bishops behind, turn presbyterian, you become a member of a national church which is a part of this society, "divided from the rest by distance of place and political regulations, which (says our author) affect not the purpose assigned, nor the appointed institutions." Even there, he assures you, though they have no episcopal ordination, but presbyters only are allowed, the church "is governed by persons possessed of powers delegated to them by the head and founder of the society while on earth."† You may pass through the Lutheran churches in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and part of Germany, or proceed to the Calvinistic churches in Switzerland, Germany, France, or Holland, you

* Strictures, p. 40.

† Strictures, p. 40.

will still find yourself within the pale, and the presbyterianism of the latter is no bar to your salvation, when you are in the proper *place* for it, and where sovereign princes have decreed that it is the order of Heaven. Whether you go to Constantinople or to Rome, still you are quite at home. Yes, Sir, I am not mistaken: here is not one word of the definition which needs to prevent your excursions. It is true, the homily which I quoted,* and which so convincingly argues, that the church of Rome is not in the church of Christ, might be an incumbrance to you; but that, you know, Sir, you would naturally leave behind. Still you would find yourself in the midst of a very ancient "society of men, incorporated together by baptism in the name of the ever blessed Trinity, for a purpose assigned and with appointed institutions,—which is governed by persons possessed of powers delegated to them by the head and founder of the society while on earth." Unfortunately, however, as is the case in almost every human invention, while so much is gained, a great deal is lost. While you are so happy among your congenial friends at Rome, you leave us under a considerable difficulty in supporting the Reformation in England. How shall we be acquitted of schism, who have separated from the papacy, which it appears, after all, is the visible church of Christ?

But is this mode of defining the visible church of Christ exactly the thing? Not to repeat that we find no such church either in the New Testament, or in the documents of your own church,—the definition takes for granted every thing that was to be proved. All the arguments founded upon it, therefore, vanish in thin air.

Having thus settled the point concerning the church in a manner much to his own mind, he now proceeds to shew that this "visible church universal," is necessarily episcopal. With great consistency, no doubt, after having made out that all the presbyterian churches, whether "in alliance with the state, or tolerated only,"† are parts of this society!

1. He proceeds in his argument by comparing the

* Letters, p. 66, 67.

† Strictures, p. 41.

twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples, with the twelve princes of the tribes of Israel, and the seventy elders.† You think he is about to prove, that the apostles were princes, and that the seventy disciples were elders, or presbyters, under them. But that would not answer the purpose. How then is it to appear that the twelve princes, and the seventy elders, appointed their successors, and handed down to them their authority, by imposition of hands? The case which he undertakes to argue, would not bear this construction. It therefore counts for nothing. The truth is, that the princes and elders were, *officially*, neither prophets nor priests, but civil magistrates.

"This first institution of the church (he argues) was not a *primus inter pares*:"‡ To which we reply, Neither was it a diocesan, anti-presbyterian, episcopacy.

2. The next case to be considered, is the appointment of Matthias; in which it is conceded, that no hands were laid on him by the eleven. The reason of this I ventured to suggest,§ and have received no reply to my remarks. Our author, however, states the case thus: "The apostles were aware that they had no power of anointing another apostle, strictly so called—that this was the office of the head only; which was the cause why they did not presume to lay hands on the person afterwards chosen."|| Now, I have argued, that it was because they had not yet received the Holy Ghost, which was the thing to be imparted by imposition of hands. But that there was no impropriety in laying hands on an apostle, when the Holy Ghost was given in that rite, I have already proved from Ananias' laying hands on St. Paul, at one time, and the imposition of hands by certain prophets and teachers at Antioch on Barnabas and Paul, at another time.* But neither of these cases, nor my argument founded on them, came into our author's calculation. That the persons who took a part in this election were not themselves all ordained, is obvious from the circumstance that only eighty-one of them had been appointed by our Lord; so that there were, as he is obliged to grant, thir-

† *Strictures*, p. 41. ‡ *Strictures*, p. 41. § *Letters*, p. 47.

|| *Strictures*, p. 42. * *Letters*, p. 47.

ty-nine who were not in orders. The *women*, I repeat, made a part of this number. Acts i. 14.

3. The next case to be considered is the ordination of the seven deacons for the church at Jerusalem. The historian of the Acts of the apostles has particularly related, that "the twelve said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word;"† which, it seems, was quite another business.—Nothing is more plain than that the intention of the apostles was to ordain deacons, for this very business, to serve tables; that thus they might put a stop to the murmuring which had commenced among the Grecians, because "their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." All this was so plain to you, that you thought Philip, one of these deacons, had no right to baptize. Your words are,—"Philip, impressed with due humility, did not presume to baptize the eunuch till the angel of God authorized him to exercise this holy office, by informing him that so it pleased the Most High."‡ Thus you contended, that Philip the deacon had by his ordination no authority to baptize. But it having been proved, that Philip not only had no command from your feigned angel, to baptize the eunuch, but that he had already actually administered baptism, our author takes up an opinion equally contradictory to mine and to yours.—He assumes that the deacons were ordained to the priestly office, as you call it, in direct opposition to the statement of Luke, who says they were appointed to that very business which the apostles found inconsistent with a proper attention to the ministry of the word. This he thinks obvious, (1.) "Because as persons employed in the secular cares of the church, there could have been no necessity for the appointment being made with solemn prayer, and the more solemn imposition of hands." This, however, avails nothing against the statement of Luke.—(2.) Because "afterwards we hear

† Acts, vi. 2—4. ‡ Sermon, p. 13.

nothing of their distribution of money, but they become instantly ministers of the gospel, in the modern acceptance of the word."§—But this will not disprove the statement of the sacred writer. That they performed the work assigned to them, we ought not to doubt, without clear evidence to the contrary. As to their acting in a sphere beyond that to which they were appointed, it may be very objectionable to a modern high-church-man, especially when he has undertaken to shew "that the episcopacy of the church of England is on the apostolical model;" but it was all in the order of God, whose designs go far beyond those even of his most faithful servants. But of this hereafter.—(3.) "Besides, as attendance on the old and infirm would necessarily require persons authorized to impart the consolations of religion, there can be little doubt, but that these deacons were appointed to undertake a certain part of these ministerial duties."|| Thus does he, according to his promise, "deduce important conclusions from observations apparently slight,"* and erects the episcopacy of ages and nations upon things of which he presumes there is "little doubt." In a word, all who presume to differ from him must "without doubt perish everlasting," because "there can be little doubt" with himself, "but that" he is perfectly in the right. But, Sir, we have just come from reading a passage in which he has conceded, that private instruction, so it be not in the temple or the church, may be administered without ordination. And why not, if all the followers of Christ are required to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction?"—(4.) "This too (he adds) was the opinion of antiquity."—It was the opinion of antiquity that deacons should render themselves useful in the church, and many pious men would copy the examples of these first deacons; but all that does not alter, or add to, the spirit and letter of their ordination.—But if it was the opinion of antiquity, why is not the practice of your church according to that opinion? Why are not deacons permitted to baptize, when all three of us are agreed that Philip the deacon did administer baptism? And

Strictures, p. 44. || Strictures, p. 44. * Strictures, p. 43.

how will our author shew, that in this respect the episcopacy of your church is formed on the apostolical model?

He has made a discovery that these deacons "could baptize, but could not grant the gifts of the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands."† We allow it, Sir, and are of your opinion, that deacons were not originally authorized to lay hands on others.

4. The next case to be considered is that of Timothy. Our author having insisted that the deacons were ordained by imposition of hands, begins with a similar assertion relative to Timothy. I have granted all that you can claim on this subject; having enumerated all the cases in which imposition of hands was used, and some in which it was not. If our author intended to convince us of the absolute necessity of that rite, he should have fairly met my arguments. This he has, for good reasons, declined; but after mentioning those cases in which he finds the imposition of hands recorded, he feebly asks, "Can any one doubt the same ceremony to have been common to all, and to have been universal?‡ Yes, Sir, I not only doubt it, but have produced some cases in which it was not. Ought you not then either to shew, that that rite was positively enjoined, or to demonstrate, at least, that it was actually used in every case? If you cannot do this, be content to say, It seems to have been generally adopted, and therefore is by no means improper, in similar cases; but cannot be insisted on as absolutely necessary.

At length we come to the question in hand. We have examined almost all the arguments which were to prove that "the constitution of the church is necessarily episcopal," and have not met with one word about episcopacy. Only the cases of Timothy and Titus remain to afford a foundation for all your exclusive claims. What these will prove, we shall now examine.

The first argument rests on a comparison of those two passages of St. Paul's epistle relative to the ordination of Timothy;—"together with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery:"—and "by means of

† *Strictures*, p. 44.

‡ *Strictures*, p. 41.

the laying on of my (St. Paul's) hands." Here rests the cause of episcopacy. Let us hear the argument. "Now, this is easily rectified by *supposing* that our present practice is an actual copy of the apostolic rite; namely, that the apostle, assisted by two or more priests, laid hands on Timothy."§ What! Sir, is the episcopacy of the church of England founded on a mere *supposition* that this ordination was exactly after your present practice? And are all the churches who differ from you to be condemned on this *supposition*? In this place, it is to be *supposed* that the ordination of Timothy was according to the modern rites: and under the next head, it is to be *supposed* that the modern rites are exactly according to the merely *supposed* manner in which Timothy was ordained.—I will submit to you a conjecture that has more an air of probability: viz. that Timothy was twice ordained. You cannot object any impropriety in this, who have already endured that rite not less than twice. The reason I assign for it is this: That in one of these passages, the apostle mentions the imposition only of his own hands, and in the other, of those only of the presbytery. Now, Sir, I think that if certain presbyters had laid on their hands together with those of the apostle, Paul would not have so slighted them as to have made no mention of it: and that if the imposition of the apostle's hands had been so absolutely necessary as you suppose, in addition to those of the presbytery, he would not have mentioned the presbyters alone, but would have coupled himself with them. But I do not intend to anathematize my brethren who think otherwise. At any rate, the exclusive claims of episcopal ordination are here lost; for thus with a supposition, which is perfectly balanced by a supposition equally credible, this ordination of Timothy is left in our possession. All the world cannot prove that Timothy was not at one time ordained by a presbytery. And if the scriptures in one such instance give countenance to a presbyterian ordination, the exclusive claims must be utterly rejected. His Holiness may maintain them; but they who prefer

the scriptures to popish dogmas, must renounce them.

We come now to the ordinations conferred by Timothy. The grand question here, is, whether Timothy was then a bishop? and by a bishop it must be particularly observed that we mean, one of an order above a presbyter, and who was confined to some particular church or diocese. The common hypothesis of episcopalians, that he was bishop of Ephesus, I have already controverted. If I am in an error, you undoubtedly have it in your power to set me right. And this is the more necessary, because you rest the episcopal rights and authority, upon the truth of this hypothesis. Where then do the scriptures state, that Timothy was a bishop, and a bishop in your sense of the word? I need not ask, Where is it stated that he was bishop of Ephesus? for your advocate has not found himself able to produce one single pretension to scriptural proof of it. This hypothesis may therefore be regarded as without foundation. He must, however, raise a dust, and therefore makes an attempt at answering some arguments which I advanced to shew the probability that Timothy was not bishop of Ephesus. But you should remember, Sir, the *onus probandi* rests upon you. The claims which you support require clear and positive proof that Timothy was a bishop at the time St. Paul wrote to him. If you cannot prove this, it matters not what becomes of our proofs on the contrary part.

First, It has been urged that Timothy was an evangelist: and as it is never said that he was a bishop, it is fair to suppose that the former, and not the latter, was his peculiar calling. An evangelist, I observed, was of an order superior to a bishop, i. e. to one who was stationed to superintend some particular church. And this I thought was plain from the apostle's having placed evangelists after apostles and prophets, but before pastors and teachers.* The first objection to this is, that because an evangelist is superior to a pastor, he is not therefore above a bishop. Now I grant, Sir, that a modern bishop is

* Letters, p. 54.

not a pastor. But the primitive bishops were the pastors of the churches in which they presided. Hence St. Peter exhorts the presbyters, or elders, to feed (*ποιμανεῖς*) as pastors the flock of God, (*πιστοπούρτες*) acting as bishops over them.† Thus Ignatius exhorts the Philadelphians that they “should do nothing without their bishop, for where, ο ποιμην, the pastor is, there the sheep ought to be.”‡ And this is the ordinary language of the primitive fathers, as might be shewn, if necessary, in many instances. If then an evangelist was superior to a pastor, he was superior to a bishop.—But it is further objected, “that we have a different arrangement in Cor. xii. where evangelists and pastors are altogether omitted.”|| Nay, Sir, if evangelists and pastors are “altogether omitted” in the passage to the Corinthians, that passage contains no arrangement of them whatever. Why then do you call *no arrangement*;” a *different arrangement*?—He proceeds: “Besides Philip was an evangelist, and Philip, we find, was not authorized to lay his hands even on those whom he had himself baptized; much less could he, as Timothy and Titus could, have separated by that rite any one for the ministry. But when St. Paul among other advices, exhorts Timothy to do the office of an evangelist, it would seem the easier deduction that he exhorted him to do this in addition to his other offices, and that he was superior in rank to Philip, who was an evangelist only.”* It is rather curious that we should hear so much of Timothy’s *other offices*, without being told, in scriptural terms, what those offices were. But waving that: Philip was at first ordained deacon: and you, who are not satisfied with deacon’s orders more than one year, suppose that he always remained such. Now the probability is, that when this deacon had laboured successfully in the ministry, he became an evangelist, according to the words of St. Paul: “They that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree.”§ And is it to be assumed, because he could not impart the Holy Ghost to the Samaritans, or

† 1 Peter, v. 2. ‡ Ep. to the Phil. || Strictures, p. 48.

* Strictures, p. 49.

§ 1 Tim. iii. 13.

rather because he gave place to the apostles as his superiors, that at a subsequent time, when he was employed as an evangelist, and was much improved in grace, he could not lay hands on others? At least, this is a mere assumption which will not answer very well for the foundation of an ecclesiastical constitution.

Secondly, It was argued, that though when St. Paul went into Macedonia, he left Timothy at Ephesus, the latter did not remain there even one year. This was proved by a reference to Acts xx. 1.—4. in which it is stated that Timotheus, with others, “going before, tarried at Troas.” Now, if it could be distinctly proved that Timothy came with Paul to Ephesus, Acts xx. 17. it would also appear that the bishopric of Ephesus was already occupied: for when St. Paul came thither, he called the elders of the church and addressed them as overseers (*επισκόποις*, bishops). But where is the proof that Timothy was afterwards at Ephesus? Why “Paul requested Timothy to bring his cloak, books, and parchments, from Troas to Rome: and Troas is between Ephesus and Rome.”† Very good! Timothy was, or was to be, at Troas, and therefore he was at Ephesus! Thus are the episcopal claims thoroughly established!

Every thing now rests on Titus; for if it cannot be proved that he was a bishop, there will not be found one episcopal ordination in the bible. But what is to be done? for our author has not attempted one single proof of it. Alas! Sir, is the good cause to be given up thus? Is this the way in which the church “will be defended by her sons unto the latest hour?” Then, if reason and scripture are to be attended to, persons must soon exclaim, “Alas! for that great city!”

If, however, he dares not attempt to prove that Titus was a bishop, or according to the current opinion, that he was bishop of Crete, he will endeavour to shew that Titus was *at* Crete.—And what if this can be proved? Does it follow that he was the bishop of Crete? But what sort of proof have we that Crete was his residence? “We learn, (says he,) that

† Strictures, p. 49,

Titus, leaving St. Paul at Rome was gone to Dalmatia, which is certainly his road to Crete."‡ That is to say, St. Paul told Timothy that Titus was gone to Dalmatia, which one might suppose, therefore, to be the end of his journey; and from hence we are to conclude, for the support of episcopacy, that he was going to Crete. Admirable reason!

And how shall this melancholy defect of episcopal ordinations be made up? Why, says our now despairing opponent, "By the angels of the churches in the Revelations, the bishops of those churches have ever been understood,"† And what then? Is it not as good to say, they were the elders or presbyters of those churches? But whether or not, whom did they ordain?

Our author has been so completely puzzled with the cases of Timothy and Titus, as to fall under a temporary derangement: and, therefore, instead of producing authority for supra-presbyterian episcopacy, he produces proof against it. For as soon as he had made the supposition that the present practice of ordination among episcopalians, is an actual copy of the apostolic rite, in order to get rid of the presbyterian ordination of Timothy, he finds it necessary to throw a cloak over the lameness of his argument, and flies off from it thus: "Oh! but Titus did not ordain priests, as you call them, but elders or presbyters."* Where he found these words I am not able to divine: it might be the imaginary voice of a presbyterian spectre. The truth is, you are perpetually substituting the word, priest, for the scriptural word, presbyter: partly to avoid giving countenance to the presbyterians, and partly to load yourselves with a kind of sacerdotal dignity. And as you frequently take advantage of the ambiguity of the former term, I wished you, in arguing from scripture, to keep to the scriptural one. He affects, however, to suppose that by presbyters or elders, we mean lay-elders, and replies accordingly: concluding with the remark "that the apostle gives this reason for his care respecting these *elders*; For a *bishop* ought to be blameless, &c."* Thus has he

‡ *Strictures*, p. 49. † *Strictures*, p. 50. * *Strictures*, p. 46.

confirmed the important truth which overturns all your arguments to the very foundation: viz. that the elders or presbyters of the New Testament, were the New Testament bishops.

And now, Sir, we have travelled with our author through the New Testament, in search of proof to substantiate the exclusive claims of modern episcopal ordination; but all in vain. For notwithstanding the confidence with which he engaged to prove that "the constitution of the church is necessarily episcopal," after a great deal of empty parade, as if his adversaries were just about to be more than overwhelmed with scriptural arguments, he comes off without having given the least shadow of proof of one solitary episcopal ordination in the whole book of God; but the business is concluded by a strong scriptural affirmation, that scriptural presbyters are scriptural bishops. Thus the cause which he pretends to advocate, is absolutely surrendered.

He has one remark, however, the notice of which I have deferred till now, because it does not come under the head of *scriptural* evidence. It relates to Timothy and Titus, and is as follows:—"The unanimous voice of antiquity is, that both died at their respective bishoprics; and that Timothy, being martyred during the exile of St. John, was by him succeeded—that holy apostle being then too much advanced in years to travel."‡ The fact, Sir, I do not wish to deny; but it makes nothing against us whatever. The primitive officers of the Christian church affected no lordly or priestly dignity; but thought it sufficient honour to be useful in every capacity. When, therefore, these men had finished their travels as apostles or evangelists, and were obliged by age, infirmity, or other causes, to become local, they officiated as the pastors or bishops of the churches with which they resided. But then you will observe, (1.) That Timothy's becoming the bishop of Ephesus after he had finished his travels as an evangelist, no more proves that he was bishop of Ephesus while he travelled under the direction of St. Paul, than St. John's becoming the bishop of

‡ *Strictures*, p. 50,

Ephesus after him, proves that St. John was the bishop of Ephesus when he travelled as an apostle. And this was the thing to be proved, viz. that Timothy was a bishop when he travelled, and ordained elders or presbyters; and that he ordained them in the character of a bishop: in a word, that he was the bishop of Ephesus when St. Paul addressed his epistles to him. (2.) That if it could be made to appear that Timothy and Titus were bishops of Ephesus and Crete, it still remains to be proved that the office of a bishop, separate from that of an apostle, as in the case of John, and of an evangelist, as in the case of Timothy and Titus, was superior to that of a presbyter: that those bishops who were neither apostles nor evangelists had not authority to ordain: and that the presbyters were not those very bishops who must have ordained others, after the decease of the apostles and of the evangelists. How oft must we repeat, that the elders or presbyters of Ephesus, where St. John and Timothy afterwards discharged the episcopal office, were themselves called bishops by St. Paul himself?

Before we proceed with our author to search for evidence in the ages succeeding that of the apostles, let us review the whole affair, as far as scriptural evidence goes.—1. I shewed, in my fourth Letter, that in both the Jewish and the Christian church, persons unordained were permitted to officiate as public teachers. He replies that none of them taught publicly in the temple or the church: and therefore I have now shewn, that among the Jews such persons did teach in the temple, and that whereas there were no consecrated places among the first Christians, such persons did teach in their public assemblies, and subsequently in their churches, when they had such places.—In my fifth Letter, 2. I have shewn, that when the translators of our Bible use words which are supposed to designate a religious rite, called ordination, the original scriptures convey no such idea, but that of an appointment or election: and he has not attempted to disprove this. 3. I have given proof that these appointments were sometimes, but not always, made with imposition of hands: and he asserts that imposition of hands was used some-

times, and therefore we ought to take for granted that it was used always, in direct opposition to those places in which it is obvious that it was not. 4. I have demonstrated that imposition of hands was used to convey, not authority, but ministerial gifts: and he has not attempted to prove the contrary. 5. You asserted that no ordination but that which is episcopal is valid: and therefore I examined the scriptures on this subject, and proved, that there is not one decisively episcopal ordination recorded in them. He has endeavoured in vain to produce one. 6. I asserted and proved, that a scriptural presbyter, and a scriptural bishop, are identically the same: and instead of replying to my arguments, he has corroborated my statement, and thus has overturned all his own scheme, and destroyed all his own reasonings.

And now, Sir, you will admire with me the appropriate manner in which he takes his leave of the scriptures, vainly expecting, that what, with all his efforts and straining, he could not make out from thence, he may be able to "eke out," by the assistance of consecutive writers. "Such then is the information which we receive from the scriptures on this subject. But no person wishing to investigate the truth fairly, would avail himself of that brevity for the purpose of puzzling or contradicting his antagonist. He would rather *eke out* the scanty information of scripture with the earliest and most authentic documents of those times."* Thus, Sir, you see it fairly conceded that the scriptures are not of themselves sufficient to prove that the constitution of the church is necessarily episcopal, or to establish the exclusive claims of episcopal ordination. And yet you boast of the *apostolical* constitution of your church, and our author is by and by to prove, that "the episcopacy of the church of England is on the apostolical model."

I am, REV. SIR,

Yours, &c.

EDWARD HARE.

Liverpool,
Dec. 28, 1815.

* *Strictures*, p. 50.

LETTER III.

REVEREND SIR,

As your notions of an episcopal church find no support from the New Testament, your advocate now refers us to the primitive fathers. Here, Sir, we do not travel with the same degree of safety. You know that even in the apostles' days, the mystery of iniquity did already work, and that its energy increased till the Roman emperor no longer hindered: and then the man of sin was fully revealed. Then the once faithful city became a harlot, the great whore, and the mother of harlots and abominations. This mystery of iniquity consisted partly in the lurking ambition of some of the professed ministers of him who washed his disciples' feet. Their Divine Master had plainly said, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."* Many, however, soon began to adopt distinguishing titles, to affect an external dignity, and to lord it over God's heritage. They became not only priests, but deans, archdeacons, bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, and patriarchs, with princely dignity and power: till one eclipsed the rest by assuming a supereminence which had been expressly forbidden, and styling himself the pope, (or father) the vicar of God, God upon earth; who laid princes at his feet, and disposed of kingdoms at his pleasure. All this, therefore, and a great deal more, has the unquestionable support of antiquity. Hence, we ought to be extremely cautious how we

* Mat. xx. 25—27.

follow the fathers, as they are called, and to mark every deviation among them from evangelical simplicity, especially in priestly distinction and dignity, as the beginning of the grand apostacy.

But do not misunderstand me. I do not speak thus because the first ages of the Christian church will afford you a pattern of the English hierarchy, or will vindicate the exclusive claims of modern episcopal ordination. For three centuries at least, there remained a considerable measure of Christian simplicity: and though the clouds and darkness were approaching, the woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, was still visible through the hazy atmosphere, and plainly distinguished herself from the mother of harlots.

Your successor describes the church of England as a national church, divided from other parts of the visible church universal, by distance of place, and political regulations: and talks about it as if the state of the visible church in primitive times, were similar to that of our national establishment. Now, Sir, you cannot be ignorant that there was no national church until the time of Constantine, who, on his conversion to Christianity, (such as that conversion was,) heaped worldly honours and emoluments on the clergy, and by an illegitimate union of the church and the world, defiled the hitherto chaste virgin: and by external decorations, and inward corruption, transformed her into an abominable adulteress, to whom he gave a suitable establishment. Unless, therefore, you now renounce the distinction on which he insists, between the visible church of Christ, and a national church, you cannot justly argue from the primitive unestablished church, to the present establishment. To that primitive unestablished church we appeal, against all your exclusive pretensions.

Clemens Romanus, as the anonymous author has stated, was a disciple of St. Paul. It is perfectly clear from his epistle, that in his day the order of presbyters, and that of bishops, were but one. He says, that the apostles and apostolic preachers, "ordained bishops and deacons."* "In the country and

* 1 Epis. to Cor.

cities where the apostles preached, they ordained their first converts for bishops and deacons over those who should believe: nor were these orders new, for so many ages past, it was thus prophesied concerning bishops and deacons, I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith.* So again: "The apostles foreknew through our Lord Jesus Christ, that contentions would arise about the title of the bishoprick, and therefore having a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed persons, as we have before said, (viz. bishops and deacons,) and then gave direction that when they should die, other approved men should succeed them."† We cannot have more satisfactory evidence, that in the opinion of Clemens, the apostles appointed only bishops and deacons: and that the appointment of these only was designed to prevent among the pastors of the churches, all contention about the distinct episcopalian dignity. That he makes use of the title of presbyter, as well as of bishop, is granted. But he regards them both as appertaining to the same identical persons, and not as distinguishing two orders. He exhorts the Corinthians to "revere those who had the rule over them," who were undoubtedly their bishops, and whom he, however, calls "presbyters."‡ In another place, he calls on them to be subject to their presbyters, where he would have said bishops, as being the proper rulers of the church, if he had not meant the same persons by presbyters.§ And in a third place, the persons of whom he had just spoken, as "having holily and without blame fulfilled the duties of their bishoprick," he calls presbyters. "Blessed are those presbyters who having finished their course before these times, have obtained a fruitful and perfect dissolution."||

To the Testimony of Clemens we may properly add that of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John, and who exhorts the Philippians to "be subject to their presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ."¶ In this exhortation he includes the bishops under the order of presbyters; as is obvious from two circumstances: 1. If bishops had been an

* Epis. to Cor. sec. 42. † Sec. 44. ‡ Sec. 1. § Sec. 77. || Sec. 44.
¶ Epis. to Phil. sec. 5.

order superior to presbyters, they must have been mentioned in their place, above all others. 2. He gives the highest dignity to presbyters, comparing them with God; and leaving no room for a higher order. It is true, as your second observes,‡ Poly-carп was himself a bishop. We deny not that there were bishops in the primitive church; but that a bishop was of an order superior to a presbyter. That he was a bishop seventy or seven hundred years, in this instance, proves nothing. That Ignatius, who wrote in the beginning of the second century, has made some distinction between a bishop and a presbyter, cannot be denied. Your friend has made the best use of this which he could; and is not insensible of his supposed advantage. While he was engaged in proving that the constitution of the church is necessarily episcopal, from the writings of the apostles, he found it would not serve the turn to keep in view any such distinction, because they would not support him in it. But in the time of Ignatius, such a change had taken place, as appeared to favour his views: and therefore now he distinctly states, that by the church being episcopal he means, that "three orders of clergy existed then: a bishop, with priests (i. e. presbyters) and deacons."* And again: "The assassination of Julius Cæsar cannot be so proved from ancient authors, as that the churches, in the time of St. John and Ignatius, were governed by bishops, priests, (i. e. presbyters) and deacons."† But beware of too hasty a triumph! Remember, Sir, that the apostles appointed only two orders, bishops, (*alias* presbyters) and deacons: that before the time when Ignatius wrote, there was as yet no distinction between presbyters and bishops: and that, therefore, unless the scriptures had afforded you better support, St. John might have been better omitted on this occasion.—You will then observe, that although in the time of Ignatius, and in some churches, the principal presbyter had assumed the title of bishop by way of eminence, it was not so in the beginning. This distinction was the first step towards ecclesiastical preferment. But whatever it

‡ Strictures, p. 60. * Strictures, p. 57. † Strictures, p. 69.

might afterwards produce, it was then merely nominal ; for the bishops did not yet dream of their being an order superior to their presbyters. They to whom Ignatius appropriates the title of bishops, seem to have been a kind of presiding presbyters, or principal rulers of their respective churches. They differed in degree, but not in order : as a curate who is ordained priest is of the same order with his rector, though not of the same degree ; and is authorized to perform all the same offices, though under his direction. The case of a presbyter was something like that of a priest, who has received only ordination : the case of a bishop was that of a priest who has received institution. Their relation to each other resembled in some measure the relation of our modern bishops and the archbishop ; for though the latter is exalted above his brethren, he is of the same order.* That bishops and presbyters were still accounted of the same order is abundantly manifest. We cannot indeed cite with propriety the authority of Clemens Romanus ; for we are now contemplating a period subsequent to that in which he wrote. But Irenæus, who flourished after Ignatius, in the latter part of the second century, will decide this point. He says, "It is a duty to withdraw from those presbyters who serve their lusts, and who, not having the fear of God in their hearts, despise others and are lifted up with the dignity of their first seat ; but to adhere to those who keep the doctrine of the apostles, and with their presbyterian order are inoffensive, and exemplary in sound doctrine, and an holy conversation, to the information and correction of others. Such presbyters (*tales presbyteros*) the church educates, and of them the prophet says, I will give thee princes in peace, and

* Ignatius was a man, and not infallible. All his sayings are therefore by no means to be justified. What shall we think of the following extravagant sentence, quoted with such high approbation by our author ?— "I recommend that you do every thing in the concord of God ; the bishop being placed in God's stead, and the presbyters for the sanhedrim of the apostles." Epistle to the Magnesians. If the bishop is literally "in God's stead," it may not be so much amiss for the bishop of Rome to style himself, "Vice-God." And if the presbyters stand in the place of the sanhedrim of the apostles, surely they may justly perform their functions, and confer ordination.

bishops (*episcopos tuos*) in righteousness."†—Clemens Alexandrinus wrote in the commencement of the third century. Although he makes mention of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, he does it in such a manner as to shew that the two first differed not in order but in degree, and that the bishop is included in the presbytery. "The processes of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, are an imitation of the angelick glory, and of that dispensation which, as the scriptures say, they wait for, who treading in the steps of the apostles, live in the perfection of evangelical righteousness; for these, the apostle writes, shall be took up into the clouds, and there first as deacons attend, and then according to the process, or next station of glory, be admitted into the presbytery; for glory differs from glory, till they increase to a perfect man."‡ According to this writer, whose authority is unquestionable, the bishops differed from the presbyters, only by being the superior of their order, and having therefore the first seat in the presbytery. "He is in truth a presbyter of the church, and a minister of the will of God, who does and teaches the things of the Lord, not ordained by men, or esteemed just because a presbyter, but because just, therefore received into the presbytery, who although he be not honoured with the first seat on earth, yet shall hereafter sit down on the twenty and four thrones, mentioned in the apocalypse, judging the people."§

As bishops and presbyters were accounted of the same order, so the latter, under the direction of the former, performed all the same functions. It is not necessary to prove that presbyters preached, baptized, and administered the Lord's supper. All this will be conceded. But they also ruled in their respective churches, confirmed the members of them, and ordained others.—1. They ruled in the church. Polycarp says, "Let the presbyters be tender and merciful,—not hastily believing a report against any man, not rigid in judgment."* And Tertullian says, "Approved elders did preside."†—2. They confirmed by

† Lib. IV. cap. xliv. p. 278. ‡ Stromat. lib. vi. p. 481.
 § Stromat. lib. vi. p. 480. * Cave's Life of St. Polycarp, p. 127.
 † Apol. chap. xxxix. p. 709.

imposition of hands. This rite was used on two occasions: the baptism of converts, and the absolution of penitents. That it was used at the baptism of converts is evident. Tertullian says, "As soon as we come out of the baptismal laver, we are anointed, and then receive imposition of hands."[‡] If then the presbyters baptized, they also confirmed.—It was used also on the absolution of penitents. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, ordered his presbyters "to confess, and absolve by imposition of hands, those who were in danger of death."[§] and that "if any were in danger they should not wait for his presence, but betake themselves to the first presbyter they could find, who should receive their confession, and absolve them by imposition of hands."[¶]—3. Presbyters also ordained. It will be readily conceded that presbyters ordained in conjunction with their bishop; but it must also be observed that the bishop did not ordain without his presbyters. According to Cyprian, "all clerical ordinations were performed by the common council of the whole presbytery."^{||} This account of ordination is something like that which is given of the ordination of Timothy, in the place where it is said that he received "the imposition of the hands of the presbytery." Should it be objected, that the presbyters could not ordain without their bishop, it is answered, nor could they admit members into the church without him. But the reason of both these regulations is obvious. The bishop was a resident, and therefore was to direct all the acts of the church. But as it does not follow that presbyters were not of an order by whom admission was valid, it is no consequence, that ordination by them, if allowed by circumstances, was invalid.* Ignatius, in his epistle to Polycarp, says, "It is proper for

* The consecration of bishops, in the church of England, must be, if possible, by the archbishop. Yet this is not absolutely necessary; for another bishop can perform it by lawful commission. The case in the primitive church seems to have been very similar. The presence of the bishop was required; but by his authority, or in case of his absence, presbyters were supposed to have the power; though it would have been disorderly to have superseded their superior.

‡ Tert. de bapt. p. 599, 600. § Euseb. book VI. chap. xliv. p. 246.

¶ Epis. xiii. sec. 1. || Epis. xxiv. p. 55.

those who are about to marry to unite with the assent of the bishop." But does it follow, that if a man should marry without the consent of the bishop, his marriage would be null and void? The truth is, that primitive bishops concerned themselves in all the affairs of the members of their churches, and deserved to be consulted and obeyed. But it by no means follows, that their interference was absolutely necessary to give validity to every transaction. And although it was decent that the presbyters should not ordain new officers in their respective churches, without their bishop, it does not follow that they had not power to do so, if the absence of their bishop rendered it in any measure necessary, and especially if they had directions from him to that purpose. At any rate, we see that ordination by presbyters was accounted valid, and was so spoken of, without any particular mention of the bishop: so that the presbytery, as a bench of presbyters, had power to ordain.—In a word, "All power and grace," says Firmilian, "is constituted in the church, where elders (*majores natu*) preside, who have the power of baptizing, confirming, and ordaining."[†]

Such was the case of the bishops and the presbyters. The deacons, as Ignatius says, were properly "deacons of meats and drinks." They took care of the church's money, distributed it among the poor, attended on the sick, delivered the elements to the communicants, and conveyed them to those who were confined. Like the first deacons, they also preached, though not designedly ordained for that work. To all this you will agree. But I must add also, that according to Tertullian, they baptized. "A bishop has a right to baptize, and also the presbyters and deacons."^{*} And as they were the persons employed in delivering the elements to the communicants, they may be properly said, in a subordinate sense to administer the sacraments, which they would undoubtedly have done as principals if the absence of the bishop and of the presbyters had rendered that measure necessary.

If it offend you that deacons baptized in the

[†] Apud Cyprian. Epis. lxxv. sec. 6. * Tertullian de Bapt. p. 602.

primitive church, how will you bear to hear that the laity, persons without orders, were permitted both to preach* and to baptize? You have perhaps heard that Origen, before he was yet in holy orders, preached publicly in Palestine, by the desire of the bishops of that country: and when Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria took offence at it, Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, and Theoctistus of Cæsarea wrote to him in vindication of it. "Whereas you write, (say they) in your letter, that it was never before seen or done, that laymen should preach in the presence of bishops, therein you wander from the truth; for wheresoever any are found, that are fit to profit the brethren, the holy bishops of their own accord ask them to preach unto the people. So Evelpis was desired by Neon bishop of Laranda, and Paulinus by Celsus of Iconium, and Theodorus by Atticus of Synnada, our most blessed brethren; and it is credible that this is likewise done in other places, though we know it not."† Yes, Sir, and they occasionally, and in cases of necessity, baptized. "It is allowed (says Tertullian) to laymen, in cases of necessity, to baptize."† From hence you will gather, that however for the sake of decency and order the clergy only were allowed generally to administer the ordinances, they did not think them invalid when administered by a pious layman.

As it will be well to complete here our examination of the fathers, it may not be amiss to inquire,—What was it that the primitive church deemed the source of the validity of their ordinations? To this the answer is,—Not the mere rite of imposition of hands, which it is acknowledged was then practised, but the thorough examination which the candidate underwent, and the decided judgment of both the laity and the clergy. "The ordination of priests ought not to be held but in the presence of the people, that either the crimes of the bad being

* It is a known fact that the Waldenses, in the twelfth century, supposed that every man of the congregation, who possessed ability, and felt himself so disposed, might exhort and pray, confirming the hearts of the disciples. And as they admitted the then established order of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, though under a different name, it will be conceded that they were a part of the church universal.

‡ Apud Euseb. lib. VI. cap. xix. p. 222. † De Bapt. p. 602.

detected, or the merits of the good being declared, the ordination may be just and legitimate, being examined by the suffrage and judgment of all."§

It will now appear with clearness of evidence, that though the primitive churches could almost infallibly trace the uninterrupted succession of their pastors from Christ and his apostles, they did not, like you, rest the validity of the Christian ordinances on that foundation. It is true, they alluded occasionally to that succession : but it was in proof of their holding the true faith, rather than of their receiving the valid sacraments. "We challenge the hereticks, says Irenæus, to that tradition, which was handed down from the apostles by the succession of bishops."* They were not the schismatics, but the heretics, whom they met with this argument. In perfect accord with this sentiment, is that of Chrysostom, as it is quoted by yourself against the Roman church, who had commanded it to be erased from the copy of his works, lest it should militate against a church supposed to be built on the successor of St. Peter: "The church is not built on the man, but on the faith."†

It is allowed that a separation from their ministers was accounted a schism. The bishop was, under God, their centre of union : and therefore, they asserted frequently, "whosoever are not with the bishop, are not in the church."‡ And something like schism may be justly imputed to any one who makes a causeless separation from a bishop so constituted as theirs were, and with whom he has enjoyed such an union as existed between those pastors and their respective flocks. But how perfectly inapplicable is this to a separation from a bishop of our national church !

1. Their bishops were elected by the full consent of the people. When bishop Anterus died, "All the brethren met together in the church to choose a successor."¶ And thus Cyprian was chosen "by the suffrage of all the people."|| But what an amazing difference is there between separating from a bishop chosen by the consent of his church, every

§ Cypr. Epist. lxviii. sec. 4. * Iren. lib. III. cap. iii. 170, 171.

† Ser. p. 19. ‡ Cypr. Epist. lxix. sec. 7. p. 209.

¶ Apud Euseb. lib. V. cap. xxviii. p. 229. || Cypr. Epist. iv. sec. 7.

member of which had an intimate knowledge of him before his election, whose fitness for the office they have acknowledged, and whose authority they have voluntarily, and perhaps I should say conscientiously, recognized in the presence of God,—and separating from a bishop of whom we have no personal knowledge, of whose fitness for that office we have had no evidence, and whose authority we never acknowledged, but who is placed over us by the uncontrolled authority of our civil governors. Who can prove that the members of the primitive church would have united themselves with such a man on any conditions?

2. Their bishops were resident in the church which was an assembly convened in one place. They had in many instances been instruments in the conversion of the members of their respective churches. They had generally baptized and confirmed them. But especially they had officiated among them as their pastors: had instructed and edified them by their discourses and example: and their members had the best possible reasons for adhering to them. On the other hand, most of us have never been blessed with the sight of our diocesan. He has done nothing for us: he has said nothing to us. We have received from him no instruction, no reproof, no warning, no exhortation, no consolation. Nor has he at any time administered to us the sacraments. What a difference! Why, Sir, we never had any union with him, and, therefore, never had an opportunity of separating from him.

3. The primitive fathers did not think that a separation from the bishops was sinful because, whatever their doctrine or their conduct might be, they were the successors of the apostles; but because their appointment was the result of a firm persuasion, on the part of the apostles, or of the persons who elected them, of their fitness for the office: because their election had been by the consent of the whole church: because they had already so acquitted themselves as to meet with universal approbation. Thus Clemens Romanus writes to the Corinthians, “We cannot think that those may justly be thrown out of their ministry, who were either appointed by

them (the apostles) or afterwards *chosen* by eminent men with the consent of the whole church, and have with all lowliness and innocence, ministered to the flock of Christ, in peace, and without self-interest, and for a long time commended by all."* Shew us one of these bishops, and we will confess how much he is wronged by those who forsake him.

4. All separation from their bishops was not condemned among the primitive christians. It was thought lawful when they were guilty of either false doctrine or immorality. Origen thought it lawful to separate from their pastor if they could accuse him of false doctrine or heresy.† And Irenæus writes, "That as for those presbyters who serve their pleasures, and have not the fear of God before their eyes, who contumeliously use others, are lifted up with pride, and secretly commit wickedness, from all such presbyters we ought to separate."‡ What then would the primitive Christians have done in the case of a worldly, trifling, gaming, hunting, swearing, drinking, ——, clergyman? In spite of all his ranting exclamations against the sin of schism, and his metaphysical distinctions between the holiness of the office, and that of the minister, they would have renounced and forsaken him utterly.

Such, I presume, are the principles on which Mr. Jos. Milner, in his Ecclesiastical History, allows, with every good man, that "in a defection from christian purity of doctrine, and where the heads of the church are in principles and practice, ungodly, we may justly suspect the Lord hath forsaken these, and that his Spirit would rest on those who separated from them."§

I am, REV. SIR,

Yours, &c.

EDWARD HARE.

Liverpool,
Dec. 30, 1815.

* Sect. 44. † Homil. 7. in Ezek. ‡ Lib. iv. cap. 44.

§ Eccl. Hist. Cent. iii.

POSTSCRIPT.

When I wrote the preceding Letter, I was really expecting that our author would fulfil his engagement concerning the apostolical model of the episcopacy of the church of England. He certainly promised. "It shall be our next endeavour to establish the following points; 1st. That the constitution of the church is necessarily episcopal.—2dly. That the episcopacy of the church of England is on the apostolical model."* Now whether he has since considered that the episcopacy of the church of England is on the popish, rather than the apostolical, model, or the demonstration is lost by the carelessness of the printer, or it is to be considered as interwoven with the other parts of the work, I cannot tell; for I can find neither the beginning, the middle, nor the end, of it. The apostolical model must therefore be acknowledged by all those who have a valuable interest in it, and whose eyes are anointed with the sovereign eye-salve: but the rest of mankind must judge in this matter for themselves: Instead of entering on this arduous task, he has introduced the important question, "how far an alliance of the church with the state promotes the advancement of the church, when the state neglects, or reluctantly performs its part of the contract." We leave the determination of this question till a discussion of it become more necessary: and with it all his complaints against our governors, who are too lenient, it appears, to the sectaries.

Non nostrum inter vos tantas componere lites.

* *Strictures*, p. 39.

LETTER IV.

REVEREND SIR,

HAVING searched into the episcopacy of the church of Christ, and leaped after our author over his second proposition, we come now to consider the reasons which he has assigned, in proof of his third : “that all separation from the church of England is schism,”* together with that on which it is founded, “that we are obliged to become members of this church.”†

Before I enter on this subject, it is necessary to premise, that Mr. Wesley, according to his own account, continued till his death, a member of the national church,—that many of his followers not only profess to be, but really are, members, and perhaps some of the best members, of it,—and that a very large portion of them are at least occasional conformists. I, therefore, must not be understood to be making an apology for them, as if they were avowed dissenters. The Methodists never did declare themselves seceders : and since the church embraces all the subjects of this realm who do not disown her, they must be regarded as a part of her family. It is true, there are some persons connected with us, the number of whom I cannot ascertain, who are not of her communion : but that is their individual concern.—Under these circumstances I can only consider the subject abstractedly.

The argument of my opponent is very diffuse ; but if I do not misunderstand him, it runs thus :—“ God has instituted a church with which he has made a covenant. To enjoy the blessings of that covenant, it is necessary to submit to its conditions, which are the reception of baptism and the Lord’s supper: these

* Strictures, p. 39.

† Strictures, p. 67.

being the seals of the covenant, which entitle the members of that church to every federal blessing. To render those seals valid, it is necessary that the person who ministers them be duly authorized. But none in this country have authority to minister them, except the clergy of the church: and, therefore, whoever receives them from other hands, not only cannot be entitled to the blessings of the covenant, but is guilty of schism and of sacrilege, and is, therefore, under condemnation.”*

This argument is variously ramified, and is, therefore, to be considered in all its different parts. Its principal fault is, that it has no foundation in scripture: the author having substituted only what is

* This conceit of the invalidity of lay baptism, was taken up by some in the reign of Queen Ann. “It had its rise from Dodwell, who, among other paradoxes which he broached, thought none could be saved but those who, by the sacraments had a federal right to it; and that these were the seals of the covenant: so that he left all, who died without the sacraments, to the uncovenanted mercies of God; and to this he added, that none had a right to give the sacraments, but those who were commissioned to it; and these were the apostles, and after them, bishops and priests ordained by them: It followed upon this, that sacraments administered by others were of no value. He pursued these notions so far, as to assert, that the souls of men were naturally mortal, but that the immortalizing virtue was conveyed by baptism, given by persons episcopally ordained. And yet after all this, which carried the episcopal function so high, he did not lay the original of that government, on any instruction or warrant in the scripture; but thought it was set up in the beginning of the second century, after the apostles were all dead. He (therefore) wrote very doubtfully of the time in which the canon of the New Testament was settled. He thought it was not before the second century, and that an extraordinary inspiration was continued in the churches to that very time, to which he ascribed the original of episcopacy.

“The bishops thought it necessary to put a stop to this new and extravagant doctrine; so a declaration was agreed to, first, against the irregularity of all baptism by persons who were not in holy orders; but that yet, according to the practice of the primitive church, and the constant usage of the church of England, no baptism (in or with water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,) ought to be reiterated. The archbishop of York at first agreed to this; so it was resolved to publish it, in the name of all the bishops in England; but he was prevailed on to change his mind; and refused to sign it, pretending that this would encourage irregular baptism: So the archbishop of Canterbury, with most of the bishops of his province, resolved to offer it to the convocation. It was agreed to in the Upper House, the bishop of Rochester only dissenting; but when it was sent to the Lower House, they would not so much as take it into consideration, but laid it aside; thinking that it would encourage those who struck at the dignity of the priesthood.” See Burnet’s History of his own times, vol. vi. p. 1196. This may serve to shew the legal propriety of the decision in the case of Wicks.

outward and visible, for that which is inward, invisible, and spiritual. He has perfectly forgotten, that they whom "God has made able ministers of the new covenant," are ministers, "not of the letter, but of the spirit; for that the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."*

We agree with him that "obligation arises from the will of a superior; and that God, having instituted a church, it necessarily becomes the duty of his creatures (mankind) to be members of it."† But the church which God has instituted, is that which "is one body," inspired by "one Spirit," and the members of which "are called by one hope of their calling;" where "there is one Lord," cordially acknowledged, by "one faith," accompanied by "one baptism;" where "one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in them all,"‡ is worshipped. This is the church which God has instituted, and of which every man who can, ought to be a member. But when it is assumed that a national church is that which God has instituted, or that a man cannot be a member of that church which God has instituted, unless he be a member of the national church, we call for proof. Such proof he is now to exhibit, "from a consideration of the nature of the Christian covenant."§

"A covenant is the agreement of two parties, who had been at variance, or had some disputes. It is in some cases, a treaty of peace between a monarch and rebels. Such is our covenant. Men are by birth children of wrath, and in a state of hostility with their Maker. God, on his part, proposes to us a covenant of peace."|| Very good! And the promises of it are, "I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquity I will remember no more."¶

* 2 Cor. iii. 6. † Strictures, p. 67. ‡ Eph. iv. 4—6.

§ Strictures, p. 67. || Strictures, p. 67. ¶ Heb. viii. 10—12.

" He has laid down the conditions upon which he will accept our submission, the rewards of continued obedience, the means by which we are admitted into this covenant, and by what we are to signify our continuance therein."* Certainly! The conditions on which he will accept our submission are "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." And we are required to continue in his covenant by obedient love.

" It is allowed by the Methodists, (our author subjoins,) that baptism is the means whereby we are admitted into covenant; and partaking of the Lord's supper, the means by which we signify our continuance therein."† In this place we must tread with some degree of caution; for it is just here he begins to deviate. The Methodists allow, that the sacraments are "generally necessary unto salvation;" but only as "the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace."‡ To allow, however, "that baptism is the means whereby we are admitted into covenant," would be to allow, that every person who is baptized is in the covenant, and that every unbaptized person, without any exception, is excluded from the covenant. Now it is evident that Cornelius was in the covenant before he was baptized; for God sent upon him that Holy Spirit which is the promise of the covenant. On the other hand, Simon, the sorcerer, was not in the covenant, even when he was baptized: for, if Peter judged rightly, he "had neither part nor lot in the matter," but was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."§ Nor is the participation of the Lord's supper "*the means by which*" baptized persons "signify their continuance therein." On the one hand a man may signify his continuance in the covenant by other means: and on the other hand, the participation of the Lord's supper, in some cases, signifies that a man is a candidate for office, and has some prospect of succeeding; but that he at the same time, "eateth and drinketh condemnation," and is "guilty of the Lord's body."—Our author, however, to make out his case, should have shewn

* *Strictures*, p. 68.

† *Strictures*, p. 68.

‡ *Church Catechism*.

§ *Acts viii. 13, 21, 23.*

that the Lord's supper is the mean of continuing in the covenant.—The Methodists will allow, that baptism is intended to be “an outward and visible sign” of “*repentance* whereby we forsake sin.”* (or “the baptism of *repentance*.”)† and that the Lord's supper is intended to be “an outward and visible sign” of our “feeding on” the sacrifice of Christ “in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.”‡ And therefore they will contend that “salvation is (*not*) ordinarily to be expected only by the external participation of the sacraments;”§ but by that *repentance* and *faith* of which the participation of the sacraments are the appointed signs.

He proceeds: “The covenant is made with the visible church universal; to her are the promises confirmed by that covenant.”|| I had like to have answered, he might as well have said the covenant is made with the whore of Babylon, who affects to call herself the catholic, or universal, church. But in effect he does say so; for his visible, universal church includes both the Roman and the Greek churches. (See p. 39.) If he means by the covenant being made, that it is offered, then it is offered to all, even to those who are of no church whatever. But if he means that the promises are fulfilled, what becomes of his distinction between the visible and the invisible church? If the promises are fulfilled to the visible church universal, they are fulfilled to all her members: and then the visible church becomes identically the same with the invisible church. And if the promises are fulfilled to the visible church universal, neither the church of Rome nor that of England is an integral part of the universal church, unless they are fulfilled to all the members of those churches. Would it not be more proper to say, that the promises are fulfilled only to the individual members of the invisible church which God has instituted?

This proposition, that the promises are made to the visible church universal, is introduced for the purpose of shewing that “the only way by which each individual can assure himself of his interest in them,

* Catechism. † Acts xiii. 24. ‡ Communion Service.

§ Strictures, p. 69. || Strictures, p. 68.

must be by his interest in, and connexion with, that body and community to whom they are made."* Oh rare divinity ! Here is to be no inquiry, Have I fulfilled the conditions of the covenant ? Am I a true penitent ? a sincere believer ? Are any of the promises of the covenant already fulfilled to me ? Is God merciful to my unrighteousness ? Does the blood of Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge my conscience from dead works to serve the living God ? Do I know him ? and know him as my God ? Is he my God ? with me ? in me ? Am I one of his people ? devoted to him ? Has he put his law in my mind, and written it on my heart ? Not a word of this, for it is all left to the schismatics and enthusiasts. But am I of mother church, who insures the salvation of all her children, and damns all the rest ? No matter of what church : be it Greek or Roman, Lutheran or Reformed, Scottish or English : only is it a national church, divided from the rest merely by political regulations or distance of place, and therefore a part of the visible church universal ?

" Still it is impossible that any covenant can be made, on God's part, without a declaration of his consent upon the performance of the condition on our part, and that not generally but individually."† Never in my life did I say a more Methodistical thing than this ! What then is to follow ? Why, that as God "does not personally appear," he acts "as is always thought reasonable in covenants of the same nature, that is by delegating and empowering sufficient proxies to seal in his name," the individuals who "having performed the conditions on our part," thus "declaring his consent." This sealing is therefore the ratification of the treaty.—I confess Sir, that I am a strenuous advocate for the ratification of the new covenant to all those individuals who on their part have fulfilled, and do fulfil, the conditions of it : and I am perfectly convinced that it is uniformly ratified by sealing those individuals. Thus far then we are agreed. But what does our author mean by this seal ? Why the sacraments : in

* Strictures, p. 70, † Strictures, p. 70.

which the clergy, as proxies, seal all their parishioners. If this opinion of the sacraments being the seals of the covenant of God, were merely stated abstractedly, it might, by many pious men, be permitted to pass, together with the supposition of each of them being a "pledge to assure us thereof." But when it is made one of the principal links of a chain on which a national establishment hangs in safety, while the rest of mankind are supposed to sink into hell for want of its support, it becomes worth the while to inquire seriously into the soundness of it. That circumcision is termed "the seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had, yet being uncircumcised," we allow. But if this was "a pledge to assure him thereof" it was not a "mean whereby he received the same;" for he had the righteousness of faith of which it was the seal, before he received that seal. And God has promised to us that of which circumcision was the "sign." "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." But baptism and the Lord's supper are never in scripture termed seals or pledges: nor are they spoken of as if they were to be regarded in that light. The proper sealing of the new covenant, and by which we are "individually" assured of our part in its promises, like the true "circumcision, is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter." It is the sealing of God, not "by proxy," but by the Holy Ghost. It is "the Holy Spirit of God whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption."* "For all the promises of God in him (Christ the mediator of the covenant) are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath sealed us."† This, Sir, according to the antiquated doctrine of St. Paul, is the Christian seal of the righteousness of faith, and the pledge to assure us of our part in all the great and precious promises. "In whom (says that apostle to the Ephesians) ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also,

* Eph. iv. 30. † 2 Cor. i. 20—22.

after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest (pledge and foretaste, says bishop Pearson) of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.* You see, Sir, that God at one time had no need of "proxies to seal in his name." And all who pretend to administer the seal of the covenant now, are either ignorant of their calling, or foolishly, if not wickedly, presumptuous.—By the sealing of the Holy Ghost God declares himself obliged, if we "grieve not that Holy Spirit whereby we are sealed:" but by any ministerial act of man, whether the minister be ordained or not, he has never "declared himself obliged" to the fulfilment of any of his promises.

Our author proceeds: "Hence it is clear, that those who act in his name, at the admission of individuals into the covenant with him, must have authority from him so to do: therefore the validity of the sacraments depends on the authority of the persons by whom they are administered."† Here is a bare-faced changing of the terms. The sacraments just now, were the seals by which the treaty is ratified "upon the performance of the conditions on our part." Now, they are the *admission* of individuals into covenant with him. Sir, there is as much difference as between signing the preliminaries of a peace, and ratifying the treaty. Besides: you are not aware that it is the Son of God, who, as the mediator between God and man, receives penitent believers into covenant with God; and that the Spirit of God ratifies the covenant to them. But you find the way to manage matters without either the Son or the Spirit. We now see, however, what you mean by the validity of the sacraments: not the production of that effect for which, as signs of an inward and spiritual grace, they were intended, by instructing the mind and impressing the heart; but God's being "obliged" by them, as "seals" exhibited in his name for the ratification of a treaty, to fulfil the articles of that treaty. This however is all mere popish stuff, and has no countenance from the bible. But we have done with it.—Who then, I ask, has authority, under any

* Eph. i. 13, 14. † Strictures, p. 71.

circumstances, to admit individuals into covenant with God ? and where is his specific commission for this work ? Does not God offer the covenant on the terms of repentance and faith ? And is not every man in covenant with God through Jesus Christ, as soon as he repents and believes the gospel ? Does not the Lord himself say, “*I will bring you into the bond of the covenant?*”* And is it not promised that the “*Messiah* shall confirm the covenant with many ?”† Does God wait till a popish priest have baptized a man and given him the sacrament ? What say you of Cornelius ? And what think you of Abraham, who had the righteousness of faith before he received the sign of circumcision ? And is every one admitted into covenant as soon as he is baptized ? How was it with Simon Magus?—And further : If the Christian sacraments were the seals of the covenant, it does not appear even from thence, that some person or persons must have an exclusive authority for administering them. Circumcision, we have seen, really was a seal : and yet it does not appear to have been necessary that some order of men set apart for the purpose should perform it. If the thing were done in the name of the God of Israel, it was enough. That he who baptizes, or administers the Lord’s supper, should have some authority for so doing, I grant. But as your friend admits that “a valid administration is not always an accurately justifiable administration, in respect to all attending circumstances ;”‡ so, one would presume, when even the circumstance of due authority on the part of the minister is wanting, if that defect be not known to the recipient and be not his blame, it is no bar to the spiritual improvement, either of his mind or of his heart. Nay, in another place, he has conceded this also : “For granting (says he) the succession of ecclesiastical government to have somewhere failed, yet as God only knows these failures, so is he obliged, both by his covenant for the graces conveyed in the sacraments, and by his design of establishing government through all ages of succession, to supply them.”§

* Ezek. xx. 37. † Dan. ix. 27. ‡ Strictures, p. 71.
§ Strictures, p. 76.

It cannot be reasonably doubted, that he who officiates as a Christian minister, ought to receive his authority from God: who never yet committed it to ungodly men. "To the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" The question to be agitated is, In what manner a man is vested with that authority? There are two ways in which it is supposed to be conveyed. The first is when a man who is truly converted to God, and is zealous for his glory, receives a divine call to the ministry, and is endowed with those gifts, whether ordinary or extraordinary, which fit him for ministerial usefulness. The other is, when a man is ordained by the imposition of the hands of those who are already engaged in the ministry, and have received their authority, whether real or supposed, by a succession, presumed to be regular and uninterrupted, from the apostles of Jesus Christ. Some profess to have received their authority in both ways; and so far as this is credible, their authority will not be disputed. You will concede it to them on the score of ordination: we, on the supposition of their divine call. The only question that remains must be between those who acknowledge and have none but the traditional authority, and those who hold an immediate delegation from God himself. They who, in sincerity, hold both, must regard the authority conveyed by God as more essential than the mediate call by man: must of necessity doubt the validity of the latter, if not accompanied by the former: and will be much inclined to acknowledge the authority of those who have received their call from above, so far as it may appear credible, even if there should be some doubt of the regularity of their ordination.

All creditable ordinations are founded on a previous divine call. When an apostle was to be appointed in lieu of Judas Iscariot, they sought out one from among those who had accompanied them during the whole ministry of our Lord, and who, having first been chosen by Jesus himself, had been trained up by him for the ministry: and then he was distinguished by the lot of the Lord, who thereby shewed

that he had *chosen* him for this high office.* And the gift of the Holy Spirit was imparted, to fit all the twelve for the work to which they were divinely called.—When the deacons were to be appointed, the brethren sought out seven men, not only of honest report, but “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,”† and therefore, at once fitted for their office; and called already to spread the truth, according to their ability and opportunity. When Saul was appointed to the apostleship, the Lord declared to Ananias in a vision, that he had chosen him “to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel,” and sent him to put his hands on him, “that he might be filled with the Holy Ghost.”‡ When Paul and Barnabas were to be sent among the Gentiles, “the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.”§ When Paul addressed his visitation sermon to the presbyters of Ephesus, he reminded them, that “the Holy Ghost had made them bishops.”|| And when he directed Timothy to ordain bishops and deacons, he informed him by what Christian deportment they were to recommend themselves as the servants of God.—Hence our church, which I quote as the best authority to churchmen, except the scriptures, refuses to ordain any who do not conscientiously profess to “trust that they are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon them this office and ministration, to serve God for the promotion of his glory, and the edifying of his people.”

From these instances it is very obvious that ordination, properly understood, is founded in a gracious fitness for the ministry, and a divine call to it: both which are supposed to precede the ordination. And it is remarkable, that as Matthias was thought eligible to the apostleship, on the ground of a preceding divine call to an inferior station in the church, perhaps as one of the seventy, so the church of England, being supposed to have ascertained a divine call at the ordination of a deacon, makes no further inquiry into that call, at either the ordination

* Acts i. 21—26. † Acts vi. 3. ‡ Acts ix. 11, 17. || Acts xiii. 2.

|| Acts xx. 28.

of priests or the consecration of Bishops; but raises him to a higher order on the ground of the call supposed to be ascertained in the first instance. This is corroborative evidence, that she finds her ordinations on a previous divine appointment, whereby a divine authority is given, which is sufficient for the execution of any more exalted duty, as circumstances may require.

If then it be inquired, What are the proper purposes of ordination? we answer, Not to convey divine authority for the ministrations of the word and sacraments: this is supposed to be antecedent to the ordination. But—1. An examination of the candidate, as to the probability of his divine call, and as to his fitness for the work. This appears from all the cases already adduced. And hence, before our church inquires whether the candidate be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, it is supposed that the archdeacon or his deputy has ascertained, “that the persons presented be apt and meet, not only for their learning, but their godly conversation, to exercise their ministry duly to the honour of God, and the edifying of his church:” and exhorts the people “if there be any who knoweth any impediment or notable crime in the person presented to be ordered deacon, for the which he ought not to be admitted to that office; let him come forth in the name of God, and shew what the crime or impediment is.”—It being ascertained, or supposed to be ascertained, that the candidate is well recommended, and that there is no impediment; he is then asked, “Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and ministration, to serve God for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people?” And the candidate, having answered, “I trust so,” is considered as having given all the proofs of a divine call which the nature of the case will admit. 2. That the candidate may solemnly devote himself to the work to which God has called him, and may thus take upon him the ministerial vows. In some cases, it includes an engagement to obey his superiors, and to attend to those rules and regulations by which the society to which he belongs is governed. Thus, to go no further, our bishops inquire of the candi-

dates for priests' orders, Will you give your faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrine and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this church and realm hath received the same, according to the commandments of God ; so that you may teach the people committed to your care and charge, with all diligence to keep and observe the same ? Will you be ready with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God's word ; and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given ? Will you be diligent in prayers and in reading the holy scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh ? Will you be diligent to frame and fashion your own selves and your families according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make both yourselves and them, as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ ? Will you maintain and set forward, as much as lieth in you, quietness, peace, and love among all Christian people, and especially among them that are or shall be committed to your charge ? Will you reverently obey your ordinary, and other chief ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you ; following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourselves to their godly judgments ?"—To all which they are required to answer, "I will do so, the Lord being my helper."*—3. The next things intended are the prayer and the imposition, of the persons ordaining, which are supposed to be followed by the descent of the Holy Ghost, fitting the candidate for his office. This we have seen to be uniformly intended, by the imposition of hands, in both ancient and modern times.—4. The last things intended seem to be, to acknowledge the

* These stipulations form a part of a covenant; so that when they are grossly and habitually neglected, the rights and privileges conferred by that covenant, are forfeited. Query : How many clergymen in this country, by a faithful performance of their engagements have maintained the authority supposed to be conferred on them ?

divine authority of the person so ordained, (for that authority has been previously ascertained;) and to give human authority grounded on that acknowledged divine authority, to officiate according to the directions then also given, in the church, society, or congregation, to which the candidate is appointed. "The forms of ordination in the Greek church, (says bishop Burnet) which we have reason to believe are less changed, and more conform to the primitive patterns than those used by the Latins, do plainly import that the church only declared the divine vocation: 'The grace of God, that perfects the feeble and heals the weak, promotes this man to be a deacon, a priest, or a bishop:' where nothing is expressed as conferred, but as declared. So our church must be construed to intend—that it is Christ only that sends, and that the bishops are only his ministers to pronounce his mission."† That the authority given by our church, is merely human, and relates to that part of the visible church, and the laws and regulations by which it is governed, is clear from the words pronounced by the bishop: "Take thou authority to preach the word and to minister the holy sacraments *in the congregation*, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto." If these be the purposes of what is called ordination, then it is just to infer that *salvo custo bus*. On the one hand, if a man be a Christian indeed, in spirit and behaviour,—be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him the office and ministry, engage by the grace of God to give himself wholly to it that his profiting may appear to all who know him; and to observe all the rules and regulations of the church or society with which he stands connected,—have an interest in the prevalent prayers of pious ministers of God,—receive the Holy Ghost for his office and work,—and be authorized by

† Past. Care, p. 96. The pious bishop might justly have added, that the eastern bishops, in imposition of hands on deacons, pray thus: "Grant O Lord to this thy servant, whom thou hast been pleased to appoint to this ministry, the aid of thy holy and life-giving Spirit; and replenish him with faith and charity, with virtue and holiness; for not by imposition of my hands, but by the abundance of thy mercies, is grace vouchsafed unto those who are worthy of thee." King's account of the Greek church in Russia.

the society to which he belongs, and by its present pastors and representatives, to preach the word of God, and to minister the holy sacraments among them;—although he have had no imposition of hands, or imposition of the hands of those only who have similar pretensions, and have no human authority to minister to other congregations,—he has as much divine authority as all the bishops in Christendom can give to him.—These then are the credentials which our author demands.* They are the same to which every clergyman in the church of England at least pretends: and therefore, though they are satisfactory, they cannot by such men be deemed extraordinary. They are the same which our opponents pretend to shew, and which alone can give satisfactory evidence of their authority.†

On the other hand, if a man be himself unconverted,—deceive the bishop by false testimonials of his “godly conversation,”—have been prayed for by men who regard iniquity in their heart, and whose prayer becomes sin,—and have not received the Holy Ghost for his office and work,—the imposition of hands has conveyed to him no divine authority: he has at the best no other than human authority, and that only in the congregation where he is lawfully appointed.

How vain is it then for the latter to boast that he is a successor of the apostles. He succeeds the apostles just as the thief succeeds an honest man in the possession of his house: as the wolf succeeds the shepherd in the fold: or as the devil succeeded the God of love in the possession of the human heart. The thief came in by imitating the voice of the proprietor, and deceiving the servants. The wolf entered in sheep’s clothing. And the devil obtained his purpose by a blasphemous lie. And the results are the same: the house is turned into a bedlam, and becomes a den of thieves: the sheep are fleeced and then devoured: the man is brought under the curse of God and eventually destroyed.‡ Shall I go to

‡ Bishop Burnet, having explained what he understood by the inward motion of the Holy Ghost, subjoins: “This man, and only this man, so moved and so qualified, can in truth and with a good con-

* Strictures, p. 78. † Strictures p. 76.

Rome for illustration, and shew you the “man of sin” sitting in the temple of God as if he were God, and exalting himself above all that is called God and is worshipped? This, Sir, is the regular, lawful, rightful, successor of St. Peter: who can make out his claims, not indeed by shewing that he has neither silver nor gold; not by proving that he is no lord over God’s heritage but an example to the flock; much less by laying hands on others and ministerially imparting to them the Holy Ghost; but by producing the names of a long and uninterrupted line of bishops and popes, from the apostle to himself, and by cursing your body and soul to eternal flames if you dare to doubt. Or return home if you please, *mutato nomine &c.* Is not this a picture of some of the boasted successors of the apostles in this country? Does the Spirit which rested upon the apostles, rest upon them? Do they tread in their steps? Is the doctrine which they preach, that which the apostles proclaimed? Does God own their labours? Where are the sinners converted by them? the believers who are edified under their ministry? the seals of their apostleship? What then is the authority of which they boast? They have authority to save souls, and yet they destroy them. *Medicus est qui medetur.*

Are not those then rather the successors of the apostles, who are most like them? Who are of the same spirit, and tread in the same steps? Who think, and speak, and act, in humble imitation of them? Who are called by the same Spirit, though not in the same manner, and are fitted for the work by those gifts and graces which the apostles transmitted to their immediate followers? and who give full proof of their ministry by converting sinners from the error of their ways, and saving souls from death?

Thus much may suffice at present, to determine what authority is necessary for one that ministers in

ence, answer, That he trusts he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost: and every one that ventures on the saying it without this, is a sacrilegious profaner of the name of God and of his Holy Spirit: He breaks in upon his church, not to feed it, but to rob it: And it is certain, that he who begins with a lie, may be sent by the father of lies; but he cannot be thought to enter in by the door, who prevaricates in the first word that he says in order to his admittance.” Past. care, p. 99.

holy things. If the question is, Which of these can give to other persons the best proof of their ministerial authority? the answer will still be in favour of those who are immediately called of God. It is true, we cannot be infallibly certain of the sacred authority of any set of men: nor is it necessary, unless due and incontrovertible authority from God were absolutely necessary to the benefit of their ministry. Thanks be to God! it is not: for only the truth and the grace of God are absolutely necessary to our salvation. But it is the duty of every man to judge for himself, of the ministry under which he worships God: for he can generally expect the blessing of God only by those instruments which God has chosen and appointed. Now what proof can those give of such an appointment, whose only pretension is, that they have received modern episcopal ordination? Leaving out of the question the anti-scriptural doctrine which they teach, the secularity of their disposition, and the irregularity of their lives, together with all the contradictions, prevarications, and blasphemies, by which their ordination was procured, every one of which furnishes the strongest objections against their credentials,—what proof can they give of the validity of their claims, which are grounded only on a supposed regular succession? That that succession is uninterrupted they cannot prove: and, therefore, their claim cannot be established. It is in vain to say, with our author, that, "granting the succession of ecclesiastical governors to have somewhere failed, yet, as God only knows these failures, so is he obliged to supply them."* If they have failed, this ground of claim is sunk: and some other must be substituted. If you confess that you cannot make out your own claim, how shall I be obliged to acknowledge it? That it is now a long time since this failure, and that the present succession has been regular for several ages, make no difference: unless time can alter the nature of political relations. Your right is still not that of succession, but of possession. You may be a priest *de facto*, but not *de jure*. Or, if you insist that you are a priest *de jure*, you must

* Strictures, p.76.

establish your right in some other way than by a supposed succession, which either has no existence, or cannot be ascertained. The claim of the other party is more easily made out. Here is a man who is himself a genuine Christian, and proves it to my conscience by walking as Jesus Christ walked. He professes to be sent of God, to turn me from the error of my ways: and, by his zeal for the glory of God, and his great concern for my spiritual welfare, proves to me that he is actuated by the best of motives. He calls himself a successor of the apostles: and I take knowledge that their doctrine drops from his lips as the dew. I, an unbeliever, come into the assembly where he is "holding forth the word of life," and am convinced, and condemned: the secrets of my heart are made manifest; and so falling down on my face, I worship God, and report that God is in him of a truth. He points me to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, to whom I look and am saved. If he be not a minister of God unto others, yet doubtless he is to me; for the seal of his ministry am I in the Lord. I need not inquire into the nature of his ordination, to seek a proof of Christ speaking in him, which to me ward is not weak, but is mighty in me. Though I have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have I not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus he has begotten me through the gospel. I never read in my bible anything about the uninterrupted succession; but I have read, that Christ in his commission to his servants, has united authority to make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them to observe all things, whatsoever he hath commanded them: promising to be with them alway, unto the end of the world. And I have found that Christ is with him. He has made me a disciple, and therefore I cheerfully submit to be baptized by him, and to receive from him every christian ordinance. He baptizes me in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and while he and his congregation "call upon God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ," I am "baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's holy church, and

made a lively member of the same.”* He breaks to me the bread, and blesses to me the cup; and God gives to me, in answer to his prayer and mine, “ so to eat the flesh of his dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood; that my sinful body is made clean by his body, and my soul washed through his most precious blood;” so that, while you are disputing about the validity of his ministrations, and talking unintelligible nonsense about his setting to the seal of the covenant, I “ dwell in Christ, and Christ in me.”†

However clear all this may be to me, it is not so to my opponent. Hence he objects—1. That “ this is a very fallacious test—a test to which many impostors might appeal.”‡ How far impostors might appeal at once to their christian deportment, the orthodoxy of their doctrine, and the effects of their ministry, we leave for you to determine. If, however, an impostor has been useful to me, he has been useful. If God has made him a blessing, that can be no evil to me. If I am converted, I am converted: if I am edified, I am edified. But what abandoned hypocrite, and vile impostor, might not appeal to the uninterrupted succession, which proves no call from God whatever?—2. That “ it is beginning at the end: for if the success of the minister is to be the proof of his being rightly appointed, then he must administer first before his success can be ascertained.”* To this I answer: In any Christian society or body of ministers, who appoint other ministers among themselves, the candidate ought first to give presumptive proof of his call to the ministry. Our church seems to require, the inward persuasion of the candidate, and the testimonials of approved persons. This is *presumptive* evidence. But that persons are immediately ordained on this evidence, seems to be contrary to the direction of the apostle, who says, “ lay hands suddenly on no man;” and “ let the deacons first be proved.” They ought to be tried as to their ministerial ability and success: and if these be ascertained, there is then *satisfactory* evidence. If a man shew

* Baptism of such as are of riper years. † Communion service.

‡ *Strictures*, p. 140. * *Strictures*, p. 140.

that he has no talents, either to convert sinners or to edify the church, there is sufficient evidence that he is not called of God; and whoever may appoint him they appoint him to no good purpose. It is clear, indeed, that, as he observes, "authority should precede the act of administration;" but that authority should be divine. Human authority should be founded on the presumption of this, and then go no farther than a probation: but no man should receive a final and absolute appointment from the church, till there be satisfactory evidence of a bidding by divine authority.

I am, REV. SIR,

Yours, &c.

EDWARD HARE.

Liverpool,
Jan. 2, 1816.

LETTER V.

REVEREND SIR,

AFTER the preceding statement, there will be but little room for an objection which your coadjutor seems inclined to press with all his might. "If, according to the hypothesis of some, both bishops and presbyters were ordained by the apostles, each with the power of again ordaining others : that is bishops with the power of ordaining bishops, and priests or presbyters of ordaining presbyters ; yet if the succession of these presbyters hath at some time failed, and in the fifteenth century there existed no presbyter ordained with the power of ordaining others, then neither can any person, episcopally ordained a priest only, assume that power, nor can it be assumed hereafter."*

Before we proceed to a direct reply, it will be well to remind you, that this is not our opinion. I think I have sufficiently proved, in my former Letters, that bishops and presbyters under the New Testament were identically the same. But, though our author often takes up a different opinion, he had reason for not attempting to answer the arguments already adduced. I have now added a few from the fathers: and until they are refuted shall take for granted, or rather shall regard it as proved, that every New Testament presbyter was a bishop. The objection, however, in other respects still requires an answer.

1. The opinion on which the objection is founded is this: that the authority of a person ordained cannot go beyond the intention of him who ordained him: and that "men cannot determine of the intention of the bishop by the real will of God, much less by their own notions concerning that will."† If this opinion be just, the objection goes rather further

* Strictures, p. 81. † Strictures, p. 82.

than the author of it intended ; for it is destructive of the validity of all ordinations which have been transmitted through the Roman Catholic church. It is notorious, and I have urged it already, (Let. p. 66.) without receiving any reply, that Roman Catholic bishops did not ordain ministers to preach the word of God, or to administer the proper Christian sacraments ; but to preach their own legends, and traditions, and to minister their own inventions. According to the principles of our author, therefore, it infallibly follows, that there is no valid ordination in the church of England : its authorities received by ordination being derived entirely from the church of Rome at the Reformation. It is for this, and some other weighty reasons, our church professes to ascertain in every candidate a divine call and authority, before it confers orders : thus deriving its authority, not from the church of Rome, but from him whose “is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.”

2. According to the practice now alluded to, we have already shewn, that whatever may be the origin of power in a particular church, and with respect to conferring orders in that church, ministerial authority in the church of Christ, is received immediately from him who is still the head. And ministerial authority implies, not only authority to preach and to minister the sacraments, but authority to appoint to that part of the church which is under the immediate care of the person induced, such officers as God may call to the work, and as the state of the church may demand. Although episcopal ordination in the establishment may convey no authority but that which is specified by the bishop, with respect to that establishment, yet the call of God gives authority to perform all the ministerial functions which the state of the church of Christ may require.

3. If you, Sir, and your party, would attempt to shew, that apostolical ordination limited the powers of those who were ordained, you would find it a difficult task. If, for instance, the apostles ordained a bishop or presbyter in any given city, you cannot prove that that bishop or presbyter was either directed to ordain others, verbally authorized so to do, or prohibited. Our author, like yourself, finds it

easy to talk about the “direction given to the apostles to keep up that succession”* of which you idly dream. But if the *tythes* were withheld till you have found the place in which that direction is recorded, you would perhaps fare rather hardly. And while you are seeking for the passage, you will probably find, that the men who received the Holy Ghost, were often led much farther than either they or their superiors had intended. When God had sent his Holy Spirit upon the apostles, how little did they understand their commission! They thought only of converting Jews and proselytes: but the providence of God opened the way beyond their intention or expectation, to preach among the Gentiles. When Peter was brought, almost by force, to the house of Cornelius, God sent down the Holy Ghost on all who heard him, and taught him to baptize those to whom he had conceived that his commission did not extend. This innovation, however, displeased the brethren, who extorted from Peter that just apology, applicable to many other cases, “What was I, that I should withstand God?”† When the deacons were ordained, it was evidently the design of the apostles that they should “serve tables.” But no sooner were they dedicated to the service of God and of the church at Jerusalem, and filled with the Holy Ghost, than the divine energy bore some of them far away from the place where by the apostles they were intended to reside, to preach the gospel, and to baptize their numerous converts. Events somewhat similar to these took place at the time of the Reformation. Those excellent men who took an active part in that great business, if they had been ordained at all, had been ordained to serve *God*, (if that be the proper term,) by preaching the doctrines of the Romish church, and administering her sacraments, with all their mummery: and thus to edify the church to which they belonged. But when God sent his Holy Spirit upon them, they pulled down the church which they had deemed themselves authorized only to edify; and by preaching those doctrines of the word of God, and ministering those sacraments, which made no part of the ecclesiastical commission which they had received from their res-

* Srichtures, p. 81. † Acts xi. 17.

pactive diocesans, they erected other churches, to the officers of which they gave powers which they had themselves received from no *man*.—Thus it was with Mr. Wesley. When he was ordained a presbyter of the church of England, it was undoubtedly intended by the bishop that he should be regular in his ministry: and he himself at that time perhaps so understood. The bishop gave him no specific authority to preach in the open air, and to raise societies. But a dispensation of the gospel was committed to him from above, (I mean, Sir, that he was “inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take on him that office and ministry, for the glory of God, and the edifying of his people,”) and he had “received the Holy Ghost for that office and work.” When, therefore, the churches were shut against him, borne away by that inward energy, he, contrary to his own previous design and to that of the bishop, preached the glad tidings in the open air. When they who were edified by his discourses applied to him for advice in working out their own salvation, he joined them in little companies: and thus, without any previous design on his part, and certainly without directions from his diocesan, he became, under God, the founder of the Methodist Societies. While he travelled about the country, obeying the heavenly call, (the inward motion of the Holy Ghost,) and rushing into every open door, it pleased God to raise up laymen, whose hearts he enlarged, and whose mouths he opened, to preach the word of life: and believers were edified. This was so far beyond Mr. W.’s design, that the report of it brought him immediately to the spot where this innovation was made, in order to put a stop to it. But when he had informed himself of the effects of this new measure, he was constrained to acknowledge that it was the Lord’s doing: and “what was he, that he should withstand God?” In this instance, he seems to have been circumstanced like Barnabas, who, going to Antioch in great haste, to inquire into the conduct of the laymen who had dared to preach the Lord Jesus, and into the truth of the reports which had reached the church at Jerusalem, and “seeing the grace of God, was glad.”[‡] Convinced

‡ Acts xi. 19—23.

that these laymen were "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take on them this office," he appointed them to assist him in preaching the gospel, and edifying the societies. And although his prejudices, as a churchman, and a desire to avoid unnecessary offence, did, for a considerable time, prevent his ordaining any of those laymen, yet when the success which God gave to some of them under his direction in America, appeared to him to require that ministers should be ordained for that continent, he, after long deliberation, consented. Of this he gives the following account.

"(1.) By a very uncommon train of providences many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from their mother country, and erected into independent states. The English Government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the states of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the Congress, partly by the Provincial assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice: and in compliance with their desire I have drawn up a little sketch.

"(2.) Lord King's account of the primitive church, convinced me, many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace sake; but because I was determined, as little as possible to violate the established order of the national church to which I belonged.

"(3.) But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish ministers. So that for some hundred miles together, there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end: and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

"(4.) I have accordingly appointed Dr. COKE and Mr. FRANCIS ASBURY to be joint superintendants over our brethren in North America: as also RICHARD WATCOT and THOMAS VASEY, to act as elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's supper. And I have prepared a liturgy,* little differing from that of the church of England, (I think the best constituted national church in the world) which I advise all the travelling preachers to use, on the Lord's day, in all the congregations, reading the litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays; and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the Lord's Supper on every Lord's day.

"(5.) If any one will point out a more rational and scriptural way, of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

"(6.) It has indeed been proposed to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object, [1.] I desired the bishop of London to ordain only one, but could not prevail. [2.] If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. [3.] If they would ordain them now, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us? [4.] As our American brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the state, and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty, wherewith God has so strangely made them free."†

I cannot concede, that on this occasion Mr. Wesley overstepped the bounds prescribed to him by

* Our author chooses to assert, I know not for what purpose, that this liturgy "was made for the use of the societies at home." Let him look into the first and second editions of it, and he will find that the political prayers are suited, in the first to the States, in the second to Canada.

† Minutes for 1785.

the spirit of his episcopal ordination. That he went no further than his divine call would warrant I am as perfectly persuaded, as that the seven who were ordained only deacons of the church at Jerusalem, went not beyond their divine authority, when they began to preach and to baptize, and thus to lay the foundation of new churches. If, therefore, he did, in this instance, assume an authority which had not been conveyed to him by the bishop and his presbytery, he was still acquitted before God and all impartial men. But it is very questionable whether he assumed a power not allowed to him by human authority. That he acted irregularly, with respect to the church, may be conceded: but not that he acted altogether without authority. If you think otherwise, I ask, What is the reason that the church requires "the priests (or presbyters) present to lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receiveth the order of priesthood?"[†] She does not permit her deacons to impose hands, evidently because she thinks they have no right so to do. But if she permits her priests to impose hands, it is because she regards them as duly authorized. This authority which priests are supposed to possess, and which deacons do not possess, is then supposed to be conferred on the former by their ordination as priests. If so, they are ordained to impose hands. Now, if the imposition of the hands of priests is of no use, and only the bishop's hand confers orders, why are the priests enjoined to "lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receiveth the order of priesthood?" and why is a bishop not permitted to ordain without at least two priests? But if the imposition of the hands of priests confers orders in conjunction with that of the bishop, what is the effect of priestly imposition alone?—At any rate, you see, Sir, that priests (presbyters) are ordained to lay hands on others, and therefore that they have authority to do it. And are you sure that when a bishop refuses to do his duty, by appointing pastors to the poor wandering and famished sheep in the wilderness, it is right for a presbyter to copy his example,

[†] Ordering of priests.

and to be equally disobedient to the voice of divine providence, and to that of an important part of the church of Christ? Under such circumstances Mr. Wesley acted.—My opponent says, “the bishops, on a proper application, did ordain Americans, without any needless delay.”* But how could that govern the conduct of Mr. Wesley, as it took place after this transaction, and was probably a consequence of it: and when he had “desired the bishop of London to ordain only one, but could not prevail?”

That this was not done in the public congregation, is no valid objection to it. I confess, it is my opinion, that ordination to a congregation, ought to take place in the midst of the people among whom the candidate is intended to minister. It will be difficult, however, to prove that the ordination of St. Paul by Ananias, took place in public: or that Barnabas and Paul were ordained publicly, at Antioch. And the reason perhaps is, they were not ordained to minister to any particular congregation. The case of the ministers ordained for America, was, in this respect, precisely of the same nature. How was it possible, when the parties were in this country, for Mr. Wesley to ordain them in the midst of the people to whom they were to minister? He might, however, have other reasons for the mode which he adopted, at which it is of no use to be guessing. It is enough that his own mind was satisfied of the propriety of it at the time, and under existing circumstances.

If these ordinations, by Mr. Wesley, were not valid, what becomes of episcopal ordination in the church of England? Not to remind you of the evidence which has been already adduced, in proof that episcopacy in this country had its origin partly from two presbyters, it has been perfectly ruined by what you cannot help regarding as lamentable irregularities, though you may endeavour to palliate them.

The first instance which I shall produce is a very serious one. “In the service used in the time of Edward VI. there was no express mention made in the words

* *Strictures*, p. 119.

of ordaining a priest or a bishop, that it was for the one, or the other office : in both it was said, Receive thou the Holy Ghost, in the name of the Father, &c.* If, according to the maxim adopted by our author, the powers conferred by ordination are limited by the words of him who ordains, and from thence are to be ascertained, a bishop received no more power or authority than a priest. And as that service continued through one whole generation, there is now in this country no more power or authority vested in our bishops, than are conferred on a priest, and may be transmitted by him to others. A remedy was afterwards contrived by adopting the present form. But it came too late, except to shew what ought to have been done sooner, for the preservation of *genuine episcopacy*, which, unless you borrow it again from Rome, is now lost to you for ever.

The next is a case equally in point : At the accession of queen Elizabeth, there was the utmost difficulty in procuring the consecration of Parker to the archbishopric of Canterbury. The bishops then holding the sees of Durham, Bath and Wells, Peterborough, and Landaff, with Barlow and Scory, were thought the properst persons to impart to him that dignity. Those, however, who still held sees could not be prevailed upon. There was, therefore, no alternative, but to employ those who had been deprived by that very authority which had installed them : and whose privation must have been equally valid with their consecration. These, therefore, were *elected* bishops ; though they could, in propriety, be restored only by the authority which had deprived them. A warrant passed under the great seal, to the bishop of Landaff, Barlow, bishop elect of Chichester, Scory, bishop elect of Hereford, Coverdale, late bishop of Exeter, (who was not now even a bishop elect,) Hodgkins, bishop suffragan of Bedford, John, suffragan of Thetford, and Bale, bishop of Ossory ; that they, or any four of them, should consecrate him. So by virtue of this, Barlow, Scory, Coverdale, and Hodgkins consecrated him : and he being

* Burnet's History of the Reformation. vol. ii. p. 144.

thus consecrated himself, did afterwards consecrate bishops for the other sees.†

These bishops who consecrated Parker, with the exception of Hodgkins, (a bishop of a very ambiguous kind,) were all no better than presbyters. Bishops they could not be, when they were deprived of both their dignity and their charge; for a bishop is an overseer, and must have something to oversee, or he is no longer a bishop. Their privation reduced them to the rank of presbyters: and these presbyters laid their hands on Parker, to make him an archbishop, who might consecrate bishops. Thus the ordination of the church is really no better than presbyterian. It is true, according to the account of Neale, there was a slight manœuvre to keep clear of this difficulty. “The bishop of Landaff being required by Bonner not to consecrate Parker, or to give orders in his diocese, did thereupon refuse it. Upon that the bishops *elect*, being met in Cheapside, at the Nag’s-Head-Tavern, (a private place, though a public house,) were in great disorder, finding that the bishop of Landaff was intractable. But Scory bids them all kneel, and he laid the bible upon every one of their heads or shoulders, and said ‘Take thou authority to preach the word of God sincerely:’ and so they rose up all bishops.” This story, however, Burnet thinks to be only a fabrication, and therefore chooses to leave the archbishop with no better consecration than that of deprived bishops, and that of Hodgkins, suffragan of Bedford. This may do very well for presbyterians, or even for bishop Burnet, who does not annul the baptisms of dissenters; but is a miserable foundation for the high and exclusive claims of modern super-presbyterian episcopalians. The ordinations by Mr. Wesley, were according to his own judgment: but this was by no means what high-church principles require.

If the preceding accounts shew that your ordination is irregular, the following will shew that it is also schismatical.

“Towards the end of the seventeenth century, when on the abdication of James II. and the accession of

† See Burnet’s History of the Reformation. vol. II. part ii. book 3.

William III. a number of the episcopal bench, who were high in their notions of royal prerogative, as well as in the divine right of episcopacy, and bound to the hereditary line of Stuart, by principles of passive obedience and non-resistance, refused to acknowledge William III. as a lawful king. They were consequently deposed, and their sees filled by the most eminent of the latitudinarian doctors, Tillotson, Moore, Patrick, Kidder, Fowler, and Cumberland : who made no scruple of occupying the vacant bishoprics, and were esteemed by the high-church party, who espoused the ejected bishops' cause, as robbers and intruders : and charged with the deadly crimes of rebellion against God and the king, and with *schism* of the church." The high-church party, to which you and your coadjutor belong, for the sake of consistency, must, at this day, condemn these men as intruders and schismatics, and all their ordinations as schismatical, and therefore invalid. Yet there is hardly an ecclesiastic in the land, who does not derive his sacred character through them and their successors. All your ministrations are, therefore, according to your own mode of arguing, null and void.

We now come to another event, as easily vindicated. When Mr. Wesley thought it prudent, for the sake of regularity, that some of his preachers at home should receive imposition of hands, and be unquestionably authorized to minister the sacraments; orders were given to them by Erasmus, bishop of Crete, who was at that time in England. Mr. Wesley was satisfied of the genuine piety of this man, who, according to the mode of arguing adopted by you and your second, was the successor of no less a person than Titus. That he "regarded the men whom he ordained as little better than heretics," is merely *gratis dictum*, and is not supported even by presumptive proof. His ordaining them is some proof to the contrary. It is equally an assumption, that he "knew no tongue but modern Greek, and the worthy candidates nothing but English." And if this were the fact, the observation comes but ill from those who have received their boasted orders through a channel in which the service was per-

formed in Latin, by the gentlemen against whom *mumpsimus* will everlastingly testify that they understood not the language which they used, or rather, abused. Nor can the objection, that this bishop "was unable to form the slightest idea of their fitness," come with decency from those who obtain orders by testimonials from others, unless it can be proved that they were altogether unfit, or that they had no testimonials from proper judges. As to the insinuation, that the Methodists "in their conscience deem episcopal ordination necessary to the valid administration of the sacraments,"* it does not appear on the face of the transaction, any more than that St. Paul thought circumcision necessary to salvation, because he circumcised Timothy. This ordination was obtained for similar reasons: to remove prejudice, and to obviate objections.

That "Mr. Wesley applied to Erasmus to ordain him bishop," I utterly deny. Before any other writer quote *Nightingale* as good authority, I recommend to him to read a pamphlet entitled, "The Portrait of a Hypocrite." This interesting tract, Sir, will afford you a little seasonable entertainment, till you shall again be called upon by

Yours, &c.

EDWARD HARE.

Liverpool,
Jan. 3, 1816.

* *Strictures*, p. 114,

LETTER VI.

REVEREND SIR,

OUR discussion of the authority necessary for what you call a valid administration of the sacraments, has perhaps led us a little away from the scope of your friend's argument: but it was necessary to go through that subject before we could take the regular course. We now return to the examination of the sweeping proposition with which he set out, and which he intends should stand firm on the arguments to which we have now replied. "Hence, then, (he subjoins,) we draw this farther conclusion, that every Christian is obliged to be a member of the episcopal community in his neighbourhood, provided that such society imposes no sinful conditions of admission."

We readily agree with him, that the church of England requires very moderate conditions of communion. He says, she "imposes on her lay members no other terms of communion, than an acknowledgment of the apostle's creed, and obedience unto God's commandments."* We know, however, that many are of her communion, and that they give legal proof of it, without any acknowledgment of the creed, or observance of the commandments. But admitting that she *recommends* a conformity to these terms, it would be very unreasonable not to be a member of so good-natured a church, if she could perform all she undertakes: if she could regenerate us, make us children of God, and receive us into the bond of his covenant, by baptism;—insure to us the blessings of the covenant by the Lord's supper,—"absolve us from all our sins,"† when we are sick,—and inter us "in sure and certain hope of the resurrec-

* *Strictures*, p. 83. † *Visitation of the Sick.*

tion to eternal life,"‡ in the conclusion. A church which thus undertakes for the salvation of all her members, is a very desirable object: and if a man can depend on her unquestionable authority, he must be a madman not to hold communion with her. But it may be otherwise with those who borrow all their religious notions from the bible: and lest some of these should be a little pained when they hear that there is no salvation out of her pale, we will consider the subject very deliberately.

1. If the reasoning of our author is just, it would be better to make sure work of it, and to join the church of Rome, the ramifications of which certainly reach our "neighbourhood." We should, at least, have better proof of the regular succession of her bishops, and, therefore, of the validity of her sacraments.

2. If he say, But the church of Rome "imposes sinful conditions of admission," we answer, That is rather doubtful; for she admits infants, who are incapable of performing any sinful condition. Besides this, as the conditions required by the church of England are not sinful in the eye of her genuine sons, so neither are those required by the church of Rome, sinful in the eye of her sincere ministers. But our author's opinion, that his church requires no sinful conditions, is no rule for me. If I think it my duty to God and my own soul, to embrace every opportunity of attending on the ministry of those who are not of her communion, but who have been the means of my conversion and edification, and she prohibits that attendance; it would be sinful in me to accept of her terms: especially as the doctrine of many of her clergy for whose ministry I must exchange that which it has pleased God to make useful to me, is such as would tend only to my perversion and destruction. Such, to go no further, would be the effect of the doctrine of your Sermon, and of our author's Strictures. Again: if I conscientiously believe it my duty to preach that gospel which I have received, and she makes my desisting from that employment a condition of my becoming one of her members, she does impose what to me appears a sinful condition. You

‡ Burial Service.

will say, But she would admit you into orders. *Credat Judæus Apelles!* I doubt it. At least, I must be a dumb dog three years, and then perhaps be just where I am. But if I should be required to subscribe *ex animo* what I either do not understand, or do not believe? Then she requires conditions which to me are sinful; for "whatever is not of faith is sin." Do not you see, Sir, that there are many persons in this country who must be either hypocrites in their own judgment, or schismatics in yours?

3. At this rate you can assign no reasons to prove that I am "obliged to be a member of the episcopal community, which will not be equally good, and perhaps much better, to prove that you ought to be a member of the church of Rome. And when you thus endeavour to prove us schismatics, you prove yourselves doubly so; for you were not content with separating from that church: you endeavoured to rase her even to the foundation, and violently tore away many of her members.

4. Your arguments, however, are inconsistent with the statements in which they are founded. Our author now insists that we are obliged to be "members of the *episcopal* community." In the beginning he stated that the churches of England and Scotland are parts of the visible church universal, which is governed by persons possessed of powers delegated to them by the head and founder of the society while on earth,—divided only by political regulations.* The church of Scotland, however, is not what you call an *episcopal*, but a *presbyterian*, community. How convincing then must this argument be! In England our duty requires us to be members of an *episcopal* community, because the ministers of a *presbyterian* community are not duly authorized to the valid administration of the sacraments: and in Scotland we are equally bound to be of the *presbyterian* community, because the ministers of an *episcopal* community are not duly authorized to the valid administration of the sacraments. At this rate, was not your friend mistaken when he appealed to Horace, in proof that, *cœlum, non animum mutant, qui trans-*

* *Strictures*, p. 40.

mare currunt? Would not your mind be changed by a journey to Scotland? Would not you become a presbyterian in Holland, a papist in Rome, a mahometan in Mecca, a disciple of Confucius in China, or a worshipper of Jaggernaut in the plains of Hindostan?

5. But have we not shewn, that whatever difference between the episcopal and the presbyterian order may be imagined by modern high-church-men, in the apostolic church they were identically the same, and only differed in degree for some time afterwards? This you should, by all means, have disproved, if you would issue against all who are not episcopalians a sentence of anathema, which is grounded on a distinction invented only to gratify the pride, and feed the ambition, of popish bigots. If the distinction of order between bishops and presbyters, is a mere human invention, your anathemas will share the fate of their predecessors of Rome, and meet with the same contempt. Your wiser brethren, and perhaps all those who have been the pillars and the ornaments of the church, are of a different opinion. Hear archbishop Wake! "I should be unwilling to affirm, that where the ministry is not episcopal, there is no church, nor any true administration of the sacraments. And very many there are among us who are zealous for episcopacy, yet dare not go so far as to annul the ordinances of God, performed by any other ministry."—Attend to bishop Burnet! who, speaking of himself and the most valuable part of the clergy, says, "They dare not unchurch all the bodies of the protestants beyond sea (who are not episcopalians); nor deny to our dissenters at home, the federal rights common to all Christians; or leave them to uncovenanted mercy. They do not annul their baptisms, or think that they ought to be baptized again in a more regular manner, before they can be accounted Christians."—I quote these to shew, that it is not a mere prejudice of dissenters, originating in their opposition to the church, but the sober opinion of episcopalians themselves, who have no selfish views to bias their minds, that the want of episcopal ordination is not a bar to the validity of the Christian ordinances. The contrary opinion, bishop Burnet avers, is "a step towards popery."

6. It has been equally proved, that ordination does not convey divine authority, but that even in the church of England it presupposes a divine call, and is consequently founded in a divine authority supposed to be already given to the candidate. Episcopal ordination may, therefore, be considered necessary to a regular administration of the sacraments in the establishment, but it is not necessary to such a ministry as was designed by the institution of them. Where there is a divine call, and authority from God conveyed by that call; the purposes of the divine ordinances may be accomplished without episcopal ordination: and, therefore, there is no obligation on any man to be a member of the episcopal community, that he may ensure to himself the benefit of the Christian sacraments.

7. It has been incontrovertibly proved, that our author's views of the sacraments have no support from scripture, and that what he calls the validity of them, is a mere invention of priests, to dignify themselves with fancied powers, such as the founder of the institution never intended: That it is God who ratifies the covenant, and assures to us the blessings of the covenant, by the mission of his Holy Spirit: That the conditions of the covenant are repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which no priest can confer: And, therefore, that all arguments taken from a supposed validity of the sacraments to ensure to us the blessings of the covenant, arising from an imaginary exclusive power to administer them, is mere priestcraft.

8. And lastly: It has been repeatedly asserted, in the language of God himself, that wicked men neither have, nor can have, any divine authority to administer the sacraments of the new covenant, or to ratify the covenant to believers. "To the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" If, therefore, the validity of the sacraments depends on the authority of the minister, it can be of no advantage to receive them from the hands of an episcopally ordained sinner; for God himself denies that he has either part or lot in the matter.

In short, Sir, every thing that has been said in the

present debate, on our side of the question, undermines your advocate's grand position, and proves, that a man who is dissatisfied with the doctrine or the discipline of the church, and can elsewhere enjoy the advantage of religious instruction and Christian fellowship more exactly suited to his own judgment and conscience, is under no religious obligation to be a member of the episcopal community.

With this supposed obligation, all the imputation of schism falls to the ground. Schism, in its modern acceptation, is a sin invented by the church of Rome, for the sake of depriving mankind of their religious liberty, and of holding the government of their consciences. At the time of the Reformation, the papists argued mightily against the protestants, and, right or wrong, would convict them of schism. It is now the cant term adopted by high-church-men among ourselves. All that dare to dissent from them, forsooth, are schismatics ; and, as in the former case, are anathematized with a vengeance. In both cases it has happened, (and our author deeply laments it,) that the seceding party cannot be convinced. "The adulterer acknowledges his sin, (Is that true, Sir ?) the thief stands self-condemned ; but the schismatic justifies his separation."*—This difficulty arises from a disagreement about the meaning of the word. "The whole body of Roman Catholics define schism, A separation from the church of Rome : and almost all our own writers define it, A separation from the church of England. Thus both the one and the other set out wrong, and stumble at the very threshold. This will easily appear to any that calmly consider the several texts wherein the word schism occurs. From the whole tenor of which it is manifest, that it is not a separation *from* any church, (whether general or particular, whether the catholic, or any national church) but a separation *in* a church. For instance, in 1 Cor. i. 10. (the passage which you took for your text,) the words are, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no (*σχισματα*) schisms among you. Can any thing be more plain,

* Strictures, p. 91.

than that the schisms here spoken of, were not separations *from*, but divisions *in*, the church of Corinth? Accordingly it follows, But that ye be perfectly united together, in the same mind, and in the same judgment. You see here, that an union in mind and judgment (as I before stated to you) was the direct opposite to the Corinthian schism. This consequently was not a separation from the church, or Christian society, at Corinth; but a separation in the church: a disunion in mind and judgment (perhaps also in affection) among those who, notwithstanding this, continued outwardly united as before."

I readily grant, that this is a great evil: but as it is not the sin of which you wish to convict us, I can at present only pray, that you may flee from it, and be of the same mind and judgment with your brethren, who love and preach the doctrines of the articles and homilies. But if you are still intent on searching out the schismatics in the established church, I recommend to you to look a little nearer home.

There is, however, a possibility of falling into a sin which is nearly allied to this; but which we will not call a schism: it is "a causeless separation from a body of living Christians." Such a separation is confessedly a great evil; but cannot be charged on us. Are you, Sir, a body of living Christians? Have not the bulk, not only of the members of your church, but even of her clergy, a mere "name to live, while they are dead?" And is it a sin to separate from such Christians? Nay, so far from being a sin, is it not an indispensable duty, enjoined by apostolic authority? "This know also, (says St. Paul,) that in the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be *lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*"* Apply these epithets where

* 2 Tim. iii. 1—5.

you please, you see that St. Paul meant them of the members of some church who had "a form of godliness," and from whom he commands us to "turn away." Is this, then, the great sin of which you would charge the guilt upon the Methodists? Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the principal part of the clergy and laity in the church of England, are such characters as St. Paul has here described, and that the Methodists have separated from them. Will you call this "a causeless separation from a body of living Christians?" Yet such you must demonstrate it to be, before it can justly be charged on us as a sin, by you who have avowed your separation from the church of Rome.* In the mean time, even our author's motto will vindicate those who forsake such persons; for it appears to mean one thing in connection with his title-page, and another, when compared with the context: "We command you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."[†]

Your friend, however, finds abundant scope for all his eloquence. He argues on a division from the establishment, as if the church of England were as much the work of God as it is of the king and the parliament: or rather, as if it were instituted by the same unquestionable divine authority which founded the Jewish church and polity; and all her canons were enrolled in the New Testament as the statutes of Israel were in the Old. But all this is a castle built in the air. What is the sin of Jeroboam, or that of any other apostate from Israel, to us? God has appointed to us no magnificent material temple, where only he will accept our worship. "The hour

* It is somewhat astonishing, that while these gentlemen know the reasons of the present situation of the Methodists, with respect to the church, to be the errors, negligence, and vices of some of the clergy, they will continue to demand the publication of them: and that when we have granted their requests, they blame us for railing against themselves.—If they see reason for ranging themselves with the heterodox, the idle, and the wicked, and imprudently exclaim, "In so saying thou reproachest us!" they might, however, be suspected to have prudence enough to be silent, and to save them from that foolish curiosity which, in their own opinion, ends only in their own disgrace.

† 2 Thess. iii. 6.

is come, when neither in mount Gerizim, nor yet at Jerusalem, the Father is to be worshipped : when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." The case to which this allusion is made, admits of a very different parallel. Jeroboam set up the golden calves in Dan and in Bethel, and drew away the people from the divinely appointed worship and temple at Jerusalem : and the Romish church set up their saints and images, and drew away the people from that living temple in which " dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and from that spiritual worship which God had appointed. Thus, as God " for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce ;" so did he divorce the Roman church, and put her away as the *great whore* who had committed fornication, and all the kings of the earth with her. The covenant of her marriage was now broken, and neither her *priests*, nor her people, had any right in the covenant of God, or power to *seal* the blessings of that covenant which was now dissolved.—" Her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also :" and Rome's treacherous sister England, imitated the whoredoms of her exemplar.—In the days of Azariah and Jotham, kings of Judah, the worship of God was restored, and the people were brought again to the temple. And in the days of our reformers, the idols were thrown down, Christianity was revived, and the people of this country were called to worship God through Jesus Christ alone, in spirit and in truth.—But Azariah and Jotham left the high places still standing. This became a stumbling block to Judah, who therefore continued to sacrifice and to burn incense in the high places. And the Reformers suffered some relics of popish doctrine and superstition still to continue in England, such as we find in your Sermon and our author's Strictures, and which continue to be a stumbling block to many Englishmen, and are made an obstacle to their worshipping God in spirit and in truth.—But the Methodists are endeavouring, like king Hezekiah, to remove all the traces of idolatry, and to put an end to the

friendship of the world, which is enmity with God: that the church may be no more an adulteress, but love and worship God alone, and that in spirit and in truth.—And now we ask, with our author, “Are not these things written for our example? Is there not the same God to the Jews and to the Gentiles also?” And will not God prosper the Methodists, as he prospered king Hezekiah, and, after the same example, lengthen out their days?

Your friend has compared us with Corah and his company, just as properly and effectually, as with “Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who taught Israel to sin.”—“But what had Corah done? Did he set up a golden calf—introduce any other species of idolatry?—Did he deny any fundamental article of religion? No such thing. He only sought to be employed as priest.”* Alas! Sir, how unhappy in your allusions! God appointed a priesthood: and Corah and his company sinned by unwarrantably aspiring to it. This priesthood was a figure of the priesthood of Christ. And now the law and the priesthood being changed,† one only priest remains, even Jesus Christ, who is “the High Priest of our profession.” Who then are they that affect the Christian priesthood? I need not say, You are the men; for you do it so barefacedly, that you even call yourselves *priests*, and your body the *priesthood*, in spite of scripture and common sense. But this might more easily be borne, if you did not assume the office as well as the name. I speak not of those pious clergymen who know their calling, and attend to it. Of these, bishop Burnet justly observes, “They know of no power in a priest to pardon sin, other than the declaring the gospel pardon upon the conditions on which it is offered. They know of no sacrifice in the eucharist, other than the commemorating that on the cross, with the oblation of the prayers, praises, and alms-giving, prescribed in the office.”‡ These are the opinions which, according to him, divide the low-church-men from their high-church colleagues. The former affect only the name of priests; but you usurp the office. You presume to make an offering for the people, to for-

* Strictures, p. 87. † Heb. vii. 12. ‡ Preface to Past. Care.

give their sins, to receive them into covenant with God, and to ratify to them the covenant of peace: offices these belonging only to him who is the "one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." You, therefore, may well be compared with Corah and his company. And how will you prove that we imitate them? Why, St. Jude says that certain "Christians who perished by a gainsaying, i. e. opposition, similar to Corah's, were murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts, and their mouths speaking great swelling words of vanity. § May I ask then, Who are they that *complain* to our government against the Methodists, and then *murmur* at the government because it has too much prudence to allow the fires of Smithfield to be re-kindled? Who are the priests that "walk after their own lusts," and excuse themselves to an indignant public, by telling us that "there is a holiness of office distinct from the holiness of the minister?" And who are they whose mouths speak great swelling words of vanity, pretending to have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to bind by a sentence of excommunication, or to loose by a sentence of absolution, and to open the gates of the kingdom of heaven by admitting persons into covenant with God, and by ratifying the covenant?

A hint may suffice to convince a wise man how terribly all these anathematizing sentences of yours may be retorted. If, however, you cannot see the folly of your own measures, or the drift of your own arguments, I will furnish you with matter for a whole chapter in the book which your next humble servant shall be hired to write. Let him search out all the reprobates and the apostate churches of which either the Old or the New Testament have made mention; and compare them with the Methodists. He will find a rich abundance of matter in the history—of Cain who slew his brother Abel, because his works were righteous, and his own were wicked; and because the offering of Abel was respected, while his own was rejected:—Of Ham who ridiculed the nakedness of his acknowledged parent, when

drunken with the blood, not of saints, but of the grape, and received his anathema :—Of Ishmael, the son of the bond woman, who persecuted Isaac the son of the free woman, because he was younger than himself, and who was therefore cut off from participating the inheritance :—Of Esau, the first-born, who sold his birthright to his younger brother for a mess of pottage, and threatened to slay Jacob; but found no place for repentance, or power to execute his threat: who obtained the external blessings for a while, but could not recover the better inheritance :—Of the sons of Jacob, who hated their younger brother Joseph because of his dreams, conspired in vain to slay him, made a tale about his destruction, and were afterwards indebted to him under God for their own deliverance, and for the preservation of the whole family of Israel :—Of Pharaoh who held the children of Israel in bondage, and refused to give them liberty to worship God according to his own appointment :—Of the spies who brought an evil report of the promised land, discouraged Israel from attempting the conquest of it, and occasioned their wandering in the wilderness forty years; when Caleb and Joshua only were faithful and were permitted to see the good of God's chosen, and to lead Israel into their rest :—Of Achan, who by secreting the wedge of gold, and the goodly Babylonish garment, brought weakness on the hands of all Israel, and lost them a battle in spite of all the conduct and courage of Joshua :—Of Saul who, by flying on the spoil instead of slaying the enemies of God, and by offering a part of the accursed thing a sacrifice to the Most High, instead of obeying his commandments, forfeited the ecclesiastical kingdom which had been given to him, and was succeeded by the man who had attempted in vain to serve him, whose presence he had abhorred, and whom he had hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, because the women sung, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands :”—Of Ahab whom Jezebel his wife stirred up to sacrifice Naboth, rather than not enjoy the herbs of his garden ; who, by his abominable idolatries, brought a dearth on the land which once had flowed with milk and honey,

and whose crimes were punished by the extirpation of his whole family :—Of the shepherds of Israel, who ate the fat, and clothed themselves with the wool, and killed them that were fed, but fed not the flock ; from whom the Lord delivered his flock, that they might not be meat for them :—Of the Jews, who cried “the temple of the Lord ! the temple of the Lord are we !” when God had forsaken them, and they were proceeding to equal the wickedness of the nations whom he had cast out to make room for them :—who killed the prophets and adorned their sepulchres :—who looked for a temporal kingdom, and shut themselves out from that which is spiritual :—who made their boast of the Messiah, and yet rejected him, because of the humility of his appearance, and the spirituality of his doctrine :—Of the priests who cast the heir out of the vineyard, that they might keep the inheritance to themselves :—Of the scribes who took away the key of knowledge, and while they entered not in themselves, prohibited them that would have entered :—who assumed the chair of Moses, to publish their vain traditions :—and who loved to be called *Rabbi* :—Of the pharisees who devoured widows’ houses, and for a pretence made long prayers :—who made clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, and within were full of ravening and wickedness :—Of the ecclesiastical rulers who, because the church was in danger, and to prevent the Romans from taking away their place and nation, killed the Prince of Life, and persecuted his faithful followers :—Of Judas, who for thirty pieces of silver, betrayed his Master with a kiss, and forfeited his bishopric :—Of Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Ghost, and kept back part of the price :—Of Simon Magus who when he could no longer bewitch the people with his sorceries, became a baptized infidel, sought to purchase ecclesiastical authority with money, and would have sworn or subscribed any thing for a living :*—Of Demetrius and the craftsmen of Ephesus, who endeavoured to drown the voice of divine revelation

* Bishop Burnet speaks of some who “ pretend that they have it (the inward motion of the Holy Ghost, calling them to the ministry,) when perhaps they understand not the importance of it ; nay, of some who laugh at it, as an enthusiastical question, (the question relative to

with the *pious* exclamation, Great is Diana of the Ephesians! but could not thereby support the worship of the great goddess, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter :—Of the Corinthians who were puffed up, while they had a known *fornicator* among them, whom they did not expel :—Of the Galatians who began in the spirit, and were made perfect by the flesh :—Of those blasphemers in the church at Smyrna, who said they were Jews, and were not, but were the synagogue of Satan :—Of those in Pergamos and Thyatira, who suffered Jezebel which called herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce the servants of God to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols :—Of the church of Laodicea which was neither cold nor hot, and yet said, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; but knew not that she was wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked :—And of the whore of Babylon, who causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their forehead ; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.—Thus, Sir, will he be furnished with a chain of arguments running through the whole system of revelation in favour of high-church episcopalians ; and make all the scripture history give evidence of the schismatical wickedness of the Methodists !

To return : When our author makes a transition from the Old to the New Testament, in search of evidence against the schismatics, he finds it in rich abundance. But, forgetting the distinctions which he had already made between the visible and the invisible church, and between the pure visible church which Christ has founded, and those political or national churches which are founded by civil governors, he proceeds in the utmost confusion,

In some instances, he confounds the invisible church

that motion,) who yet will go through with the office. They come to Christ for the loaves ; they hope to live by the altar and the gospel, how little soever they serve at the one, or preach the other ; therefore they will say any thing that is necessary for qualifying them to this, whether true or false.”—*Pastoral Care*, p. 97.

of pure believers with the visible church of England. For example : "When our Lord and Saviour was about to quit this world, his chief entreaty was, that his *followers* might continue in unity. 'Neither pray I for these alone ; but for them also who shall believe on me through their word, that they may be all one.' "†—The persons here prayed for, you see, are not mere nominal Christians, but genuine believers : the followers of Christ, as he calls them, who tread in his steps. Our Lord, therefore, describes them as "those whom the world hated, and as not being of the world, even as he was not of the world."‡ And who are *the world* in this-country, if the members of the church of England are not to be so denominated ? Again : "This he recommends to his disciples as the peculiar mark of his religion. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another."§—Here also, not the false, but the true disciples are addressed. But when did our Lord pray for the union of the wicked, except when he prayed for their conversion ? So far from designing to unite them, he rather proposed to break the league against himself into which they have entered, by converting some, and separating them from the rest. Are you unacquainted with what he said in a church of which he himself was the founder : "the faithful city which had become a harlot?"—"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth : I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."||—And what, Sir, is the church which acts of parliament have made, more than that which God instituted, that it should not be divided by similar means, when there is a similar cause for it ?—Besides : what union is that which our Lord recommends to his disciples ? That they should live in friendship with the world, which is enmity with God ? No : but that they should love one another, while the world hated them.

This is not the only instance in which, for argu-

† *Strictures*, p. 86. ‡ *John xvii. 14.* § *Strictures*, p. 36.

|| *Mat. x. 34, 35.*

ment's sake, our author confounds the spiritual church with the worldly church. "St. Paul (says he) frequently compares the church to the body of a man, whose head is Christ. And as the body derives all its feeling (query, Methodistical *feeling*?) and vitality from the head, so do the different members of the church, from Christ. If then any member is separated from the body, it is also separated from the head."*—Who would take him to be the same person who interposed in this controversy with a grave rebuke, levelled through my side at you, for not distinguishing between the visible and the invisible church, and between the universal church and national churches: and who began his career as if every person concerned must be convinced by the clearness of his own distinctions? If the passage to which he here refers ("There is one body and one spirit," &c.) do not belong to the invisible church, the church of vital Christians, and to that only, where are the scriptures which are to be thus applied? "The invisible church he allows to consist of saints only."† And if he were speaking of this, his argument would be clear and cogent, and must come home to the conscience of every one who separates himself from it. But is there no difference between a body, every member of which "derives feeling and vitality from the head;" and a body the chief part of the members of which have neither feeling nor vitality? nay, who ridicule all such feeling and vitality, as enthusiastic cant: who have little or perhaps nothing, of "the form of godliness, and deny the power of it;" and from whom we are commanded to "turn away?" Had he applied this mode of reasoning to some church, the principles of which require that its members have such an union with Christ the head, as brings from him feeling and vitality, although accidentally some of its members have not; it would, even then have some claim on our attention. But this is not the case with the political church of England. She requires no such union with Christ, as a condition of communion with her. Her members are made such by law: and it is

* *Strictures*, p. 87. † *Strictures* p. 5.

at your peril that you refuse to acknowledge them. The greater part of them are dead in trespasses and sins. They are paralytic and even mortified members: and all communion with them is not only useless, but dangerous. To argue, therefore, that because it is a sin to separate from the living members of Christ, it is a sin to be separate from these, is the same thing as to argue that because God demands obedience, we ought to obey the pope, who calls himself "God upon earth." Apply the argument to your separation from the church of Rome, and you will see through it in a moment.

As our author has taken care to confound the invisible, with the visible church, he has also managed to confound a pure visible church with one that is impure.* Hear him.—"St. Paul expressly declares, that the makers of division are actuated by personal motives only, whatever may be their pretences to the contrary."[†] What an unhappy quotation! The passage alluded to is directed to the church of God, then at *Rome*, the members of which the apostle addresses as "beloved of God, called to be saints."[‡] This beloved and holy church, the apostle warned against those who caused divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine which they had learned*; for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."[§] The warning was seasonable, but was not always observed. These authors of division gained ground so far, that the church of Rome departed entirely from "the doctrine which they had learned." The hearts of the simple were so completely deceived by these good

* When we speak of the church of England as impure; we do not mean to impugn her articles, liturgy, homilies, or constitution: though they, perhaps, are not absolutely perfect. When these gentlemen wish to demonstrate her purity, they constantly appeal to such documents: as if there were no difference between the doctrines and practices taught and inculcated by her formularies on the one hand, and the preaching of her ministers, and the morals of her members, on the other. At this rate, the modern Jews might prove that their church is one of the purest in the world, by an appeal to the truths and commandments of the Old Testament. It is of the preaching of many of her clergy, and the lives of most of her members, we speak.

[†] *Strictures*, p. 87. [‡] Rom. i. 7. [§] Rom. xvi. 17.

words and fair speeches, that men “who served not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly,” became, I will not say their ministers, but their ecclesiastical governors. Thus the pure church of Rome became altogether impure. And would St. Paul have said of those who subsequently made divisions in the impure church, what he said of the authors of division in his own time? Did the reformers make divisions contrary to the doctrine of the apostles? Did they deceive the hearts of the simple by good words and fair speeches? Why then do you call yourselves their children?

He proceeds: “St. Peter too cautions us against false teachers, which rise up among Christians, as false prophets did among the Jews.”*—This, Sir, is quite another business. If it must, however, be introduced, “for lack of argument,” be it so. Who the false prophets are, our Lord has plainly told us. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves: ye shall know them by their fruits.”† Does it appear to you, Sir, from this passage, that false teachers are those who are not episcopally ordained? Or that they are those who with the external of Christians, enter into the church to “eat the fat, and clothe themselves with the wool, and kill them that are fed, but feed not the flock?” Or, if this passage does not explain the matter, accept, at full length, that to which you appeal. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon *themselves* swift destruction. And many shall follow their *pernicious ways*; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be *evil spoken of*. And through *covetousness* shall they with feigned words make *merchandise* of you.”‡—I need not trouble myself to make the application.

Once more he levels his scriptural artillery against the schismatics. “St. John forbids us to receive these deceivers into our houses.”—I answer: St. John says, “Whosoever *transgresseth*, and abideth

* Strictures, p. 87.

† Matt. vii. 15.

‡ 2 Peter ii. 1—3.

not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God : He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."*—One of the best apologies that can be made, for a separation from all those of the clergy who neither preach this doctrine, nor avoid the imputation of gross transgression!

Having vainly endeavoured to prove, that a separation from the church of England, is that sin of schism which the scriptures so severely condemn, our author proceeds to prove, that the Methodists have separated from that church. This, in his opinion, is very easily done. "These people have an ecclesiastical government of their own, teachers and ministers not acknowledged by the church; with separate places of worship. They cannot, therefore be in unity with the episcopal church of England."† There is an ambiguity in the word, unity, on account of which I do not choose to combat this argument. The question is, Am I a member of the church of England? As to unity with that church, there is no such thing to be found. A man may despise and hate her; may not only neglect her injunctions, but be pulling down her goodly fabrick; and yet be a member. Those clergymen who seldom open their mouths in the pulpit without impugning her doctrines, are still her members. And those thousands who never come within the walls of her buildings, much less partake of her mysteries, are still members of the church. How easy then is it for a Methodist, who believes most of the Articles;‡ and admires the Homilies of the church, and is perhaps an occasional communicant, or would feel no objection to receive the Lord's supper from the hands of one of her *pious* ministers,—to prove, when it is necessary, that he is a member? If the church should excommunicate us for our irregularity, the case would then

* I do not pledge myself that every Methodist believes the whole of the following Articles: viz: Art. 3; 8; 17; 20; 23; 25; 27. But it is not required of the private members of the church, to believe them.

† *Strictures*, p. 92.

be altered. We claim, however, no right to eternal salvation on account of our connexion with her ; and should apprehend no damnation in consequence of excommunication. The church may, therefore, act as her own safety and prosperity seem to require.

" But these Letters (says our author) seem to aver Methodism to be a justifiable schism, on grounds not very distinctly brought forward."*—" Seem to aver!" So I have not actually averred it. No Sir : I have not yet allowed, that Methodism is a separation from the church. And for the best reasons in the world : 1. The Methodists never yet declared themselves dissenters : and nothing but such a declaration on their part, or a sentence of excommunication on your part, can separate them from the church. 2. If I were to aver that Methodism is a schism from the church, many of my brethren would contradict me. The tantalizing interrogatory, When doctors disagree, who shall decide? would then be in point. No wonder, therefore, that I have not brought forward very distinct grounds for a separation which I had not conceded. As our author must, however, nibble at something, he is at considerable pains to find, from my Letters, what are the grounds of our dissent : and meeting with some observations made on my part for very different purposes, he imagines them to contain, though not very distinctly, the grounds of Methodistical dissent, and replies to them accordingly.† But all this is labour in vain. He may easily succeed in shewing that those observations are not adapted to a purpose which they never were intended to answer. He fights as one that beateth the air, without an adversary, and bravely conquers the yielding element.—My business was, to prove that separation from the church is not in itself a sin : and to leave every man to act according to the dictates of his own conscience.

If the question be, How can the Methodists vindicate their conduct in having an ecclesiastical government of their own, teachers and ministers not acknowledged by the church, with separate places of worship ? the answer is, It is one thing to vindicate them-

* Strictures, p. 93. † Strictures, p. 93, et seq.

selves before God, and impartial men, and another to satisfy a modern high-church-man. Your opinions in respect to both religion itself, and ecclesiastical affairs, differ so widely from those on which their practice is founded, that the prospect of an agreement is at a hopeless distance. We make repeated appeals to the scriptures: and you have borrowed both your doctrine, and your religious politics, from very different sources. To candid men, however, we state, 1. That we are under no religious obligation either to be members of the church of England, or to be satisfied with those means of salvation which she provides for us: and 2. That as we have not in the church those means of salvation, the need of which we deeply feel, we are justified in seeking them, and in embracing them, wherever they can be found.

1. Will it be said, that the church has a right to prescribe what sort of instructors, and what measure of instruction I shall receive? Is not this to say, that the church has authority either to feed or to famish me, to give me food, or to drench me with poison? An assertion which to understand is to deny.

2. Will it then be said, that I have proper instructors and sufficient instruction in the church? Who is it that asserts this? A gentleman sitting in his study in London, or a Grub-street scribbler in his garret, assures me that my appointed pastor is a very able and godly minister. Is he speaking of the clergyman who came to church, a few weeks ago, with no sermon in his pocket, and shewed that he was not *able to minister* the gospel to me at all? Or of him who about a year ago, had the second bottle of wine broached for him in the vestry of the church, before he went into the pulpit, and drunk, "in a solemn and devout manner," all that remained of the wine, which he had taken care to consecrate, about two bottles, after he had dismissed the communicants?—I am gravely told, however, that I have religious instruction enough! Enough indeed! such as it is. One quarter of an hour in a week, is quite enough to spend in hearing Epictetus and Tully, when they are substituted for St. Paul and St. John. But this is not enough to instruct my ignorance, to

awaken my drowsiness, to obviate my doubts, to convert my soul, and to keep alive within me the flame of devotion.

The greater part of us, while we depended wholly upon the provision made for us by the church, remained ignorant, unholy, and unhappy. And God, who sends by whom he will send, has, by the Methodist preachers, sent us light, and grace, and peace. We have joined ourselves with them, and have found them to be (though not exclusively) the people of God. We are instructed by their public and private teaching; are edified by their example; and find the presence and blessing of God in the ordinances of their worship. And we have no doubt of our final salvation, if we be found faithful: for we now receive the earnest of our inheritance, till the redemption of the purchased possession. In vain, therefore, do Romanists or episcopalians ring in our ears the obsolete and exploded language of priest-craft, "There is no salvation out of the pale of the church!"

Your substitute will not, however, concede the right that every man has to judge for himself, as in the sight of God, what ministry is most scriptural, and most beneficial to him: or that "every individual is justified in going to any place of worship where he thinks he finds the greatest degree of evangelical instruction."* But who does not know, that the right of private judgment, is essential to the responsibility of the individual? Will our ecclesiastical governors stand in our stead, before the eternal throne? Must not every man give an account of himself before God? And if it should then appear that the divine providence has afforded me more advantageous means of salvation than I have found in the church, and that I knew it, but neglected them, shall I not be guilty in the sight of God? Nay, the Reformation itself was founded in the right of private judgment in matters of religion. To condemn it, says bishop Burnet, "strikes at the root of the Reformation, which could never have been compassed, if private men had not a right to judge for themselves. On the contrary, every man is bound to judge for

* *Strictures*, p. 96.

himself, which indeed he ought to do in the fear of God, and with all humility and caution." There is no alternative but to choose for ourselves a ministry and mode of worship, according to our best judgment, and in the fear of God, or to renounce the Reformation, and return to the bleeding bosom of the church of Rome.

This, after all, my opponent is obliged in words to concede. "Private judgment cannot be controlled by force; and in every thinking man it must be formed according to his abilities and means of information. No human power can interfere therein. Every man must and will draw his own conclusions on all subjects."* I pray you in my name to give the gentleman thanks, (if they are due to *him*) for this liberty. Thus far then we agree. But it follows:—"Yet if he comes forward to press on others the results of his private judgment, then I presume human powers may interfere. For overt acts are surely subjects proper for the attention of every government. Now this is the point where the right of conscience and of private judgment have been pressed beyond their proper limits.—Here the restraining power of the magistrate is surely justifiable."† Now we are come to the point. The beast, I perceive, Sir, is still alive, which "had two horns like a lamb, and spake like a dragon."—Thanks be to God for the princes of the house of Brunswick! May such men ever sit upon the British throne! Thanks be to God for an enlightened and tolerant legislature, who will hear the roaring of this monster only with contempt or indignation! But its voice is music in your ears: music such as delighted Moloc's priests, when they devoted the innocent victims of their cruel superstition to the burning bosom of their infernal god. But to pious men its "jarring sound," like that which was heard when the gates of hell were opened, "grates harsh thunder."

I will not appeal to you, Sir, as a person capable of perceiving that this doctrine is a chain forged in the bottomless pit, and used only by the minis-

* Strictures, p. 100. † Strictures, p. 100.

ters of Satan, to restrict the labours of the servants of God, and to prevent the destruction of the kingdom of darkness and sin. They who are prepared for every new state of things, and who measure the consciences of others by their own, deem the martyrs only religious madmen, and can see no necessity for toleration, nor any propriety in liberty of conscience. I turn from you for the present, to speak to reasonable men.—What toleration can there be, or what liberty of conscience, where a man is not permitted to “intrude his (religious) opinions and practices on society?” He may think as he pleases among papists, mahometans, or pagans: not because liberty of conscience is allowed him, but because if he neither speak nor act accordingly, no man can discover what are his thoughts. What then if he conclude that he ought not to join in their idolatries, but to condemn them? What if he judge that it is his duty to God, to point out the unreasonableness and absurdity of their notions and practices, and to recommend to them the religion of the bible, by his exhortations and example? This is to “intrude his opinions and practices on the public:” and if it be not allowed, he may have liberty of thought, but he has no liberty of conscience.

How are we now to dispose of our author’s own assertions? In one place he has stated, that when a man has coolly exercised his judgment, he is “*bound* to *act* according to his judgment, which in this case he may call his conscience.”* In another place, lest we should misunderstand him, he asserts, “It is the *duty* of all, each in his respective station, vigorously to oppose what he deems falsehood.”† Now, he asserts, that “the magistrate is bound by the law of God,—and by the law of his conscience, to propagate what he deems just opinions, and repress (what he deems) falsehood.”‡ Unless there should be a happy (or an unhappy) coincidence between the opinions of the magistrate and those of the subject, how can the paramount *duty* of both parties be reconciled? Who is it that hath *bound* one to act the part of a tyrant, and the other that of a rebel?

* Strictures, p. 98. † Strictures, p. 133. ‡ Strictures, p. 100.

Again : This intolerant system, though maintained by nominal protestants, is utterly subversive of the principles of the Reformation : it goes to condemn the protestants, and to justify their persecutors. According to this opinion, if the reformers had been content to speculate on the absurdities of popery in their own bosom, they would have shewn themselves very good sort of men. But when they "came forward to press on others the result of their private judgment," then "human powers" did right to "interfere." "Here (says our author) the restraining power of the magistrate is surely justifiable." Yea, "the magistrate is bound by the law of God to consult the good of his subjects; and he is at least as much bound by the law of *his* conscience, and surely better authorized, to propagate what he deems just opinions, and repress falsehoods."[§] And as in the eye of some magistrates, protestantism was a "falsehood," and popery a system of "just opinions," they did only their duty to God in restraining the reformers by fire and sword. If, therefore, the British chief magistrate choose a new religion for these gentlemen, or adopt the *good old* religion of Rome, it will sit as easy on their consciences as a pannier upon an ass.

But we have not done with it.—At this rate, Christianity itself ought never to have existed ; for it was an innovation on the rights of princes. The apostles themselves, it appears, were guilty of rebellion against the Roman governors, and the Jewish sanhedrim : for the one had chosen a modification of judaism, and the other a sufficiently variegated polytheism, for the "good" of their respective "subjects;" and were "bound by the law of their conscience to propagate what they deemed just opinions, and repress falsehood." And since Christ and his apostles were "not satisfied with their own private enjoyment of the rights" of conscience, but "came forward to press on others the results of their private judgment," "the restraining power of the magistrate was certainly justifiable." Stripes, imprisonment, and crucifixion, were the means which God had put into their

[§] *Strictures*, p. 100.

hands to support their authority, and who can deny that _____? Alas! whither are we going? What! were the Jewish and heathen magistrates justified in crucifying the Lord of glory, and in persecuting his followers to the death?—I once thought that certain gentlemen could trace the succession of their priesthood no farther than to the pope of Rome: but now I perceive that it has a higher origin, and may at least claim the honour of a legitimate descent from Annas and Caiaphas, if not from Ishmael, Pharaoh, Cain, and the old murderer.

Our author could not avoid a glance at this view of the subject, which he has therefore attempted to obviate. “If it be replied, that this axiom would justify the ancient persecution of Christians, I beg leave to demur to that reply, until it be first proved, that the heathen magistrate could not have discovered the excellency and truth of Christianity, had he fairly and properly considered it.”*—He has started an objection which he cannot refute. That heathen magistrates could have discovered the excellency and truth of Christianity, if they had candidly examined it, is tolerably certain: and, therefore, that they did not is so far proof that they were influenced, not by reason, but by prejudice and passion. If then princes may possibly be governed by prejudice and passion, and under that influence make choice of their own religion, they are not the persons to fix the religion of their subjects. And if the prejudice and passion of heathen magistrates is to be an apology for the apostles who preached the gospel of Christ, how am I to ascertain that a Christian magistrate has been perfectly impartial in weighing the merits of the different forms of Christianity, and that he had no sinister motive in fixing on the established form? How am I to be assured that episcopacy was preferred to presbyterianism, not because it is more favourable to monarchy, but because it is more scriptural? Will not every man judge that the magistrate might see the super-excellency of his own creed, if he “fairly and properly considered it?” And if so, every man will think this apology for the apostles equally good for himself.

* *Strictures*, p. 101.

The truth is, that God has never authorized magistrates to choose a religion for their subjects. Our Lord, therefore, who refused to interfere with the office of the civil governor, has taught his followers to "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, but to God the things which are God's." The Most High leaves them to make and execute civil laws; but in the concerns of religion, he is our only law-giver and judge. In fact, he has himself chosen a religion for us, and has enjoined it by his own supreme authority. And so far from leaving the affairs of his church in human hands, he is himself its head, has prohibited any addition to his statutes, and any reduction of them: has made every individual personally responsible to himself alone: and teaches us "not to fear them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but to fear him that can cast both soul and body into hell." As he has "sown good seed in his field," if the "enemy," at any time "sow tares," he has forbidden those in authority to violently "pluck up the tares, lest they root up also the wheat with them; but directs them to let both grow together until the harvest. And in the time of harvest he will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."[†]

And now, Mr. Ethelston, I turn again to you, whose papistical tenets have forced me into this discussion, to beg pardon for the abruptness with which I dismissed you. My future observations must, if possible, be confined within those limits which the prejudices of your education, and the habits you have indulged, have prescribed to your understanding.

I am, REV. SIR,

Yours, &c.

EDWARD HARE.

Liverpool,
Jan. 5, 1816.

[†] Matt. xiii. 24—31.

LETTER VII.

REVEREND SIR,

IT was probably a deep sense of the imperfect manner in which your coadjutor has maintained his hypothesis, and a strong persuasion how impossible it was for him to meet my arguments fairly, and to give a satisfactory reply to them, that led him to seek some expedient by which he might come off with an air of triumph. It is thus I must account for his attempt to bring a cloud upon the character of Mr. Wesley, and to prove that he was prompted only by ambition. To enter into the designs of the human heart, and to explore the secret motives of another, is a task rather too difficult for a mortal. There is one rule, however, by which men often decide upon the motives of others,—the disposition of their own mind: and when this is adopted they generally think their judgment infallible. Men who are actuated by selfish motives find it difficult to account for the incomparable labours and extraordinary privations of such a man as Mr. Wesley, and therefore imitate the example of the scribes and pharisees, who imputed the worst possible motives to our Lord himself. Mr. Wesley moved in a region quite beyond their conception. While he lived, it was thought by the covetous that he must be making himself rich; and since he is dead, the ambitious conclude, that he knew no passion like the love of power. This last hypothesis your friend has endeavoured to establish by a long dissertation on his character, which he has plentifully filled with false assertions, partial statements, dubious reports, exploded evidence, malicious constructions, and artful colouring. But I do not think myself called to deliver a eulogy on the character of the founder of Methodism, or to publish a vindication of his reputation. He does not need it. His labours are before the world, and the motives on which he acted are best known to God.

Mr. Wesley did not disgrace the cause in which he embarked, by any deficiency of learning, of talents, of zeal, of prudence, or of piety. But Methodism is not founded in the character of Mr. Wesley. If you ask, Why are you a Methodist? I answer, Not because Mr. Wesley was a great and a good man; but because I regard Methodism as no other than a revival of pure, primitive Christianity. On this ground only I stand. Shew me a single branch of essential Methodism which cannot be supported by the bible only, without the adscititious aid of fathers, councils, commentators, or establishments, and I freely give it up. And though I esteem Mr. Wesley one of the greatest instruments of a revival of religion which the world has seen since the days of the apostles, yet whatever you can say against him, (and I am sure you can *prove* nothing which would essentially injure his character,) my foundation remains unshaken. "The church is not built on the man, but on the faith."

And now, Sir, the time is come for me to take leave: which I wish not to do without suitable acknowledgments of the honour you have conferred on me, by finding me a more able opponent. Your successor has conducted this second attack with ability incomparably superior to yours. He has shewn some knowledge of his subject, and some dexterity in the management of it. But both of you are utterly mistaken, if you think that your works will make any impression on the Methodists, or on any pious Dissenters. If I have any discernment, their tendency is to increase the number of seceders from the established church. One of the first reflections that will occur to a pious reader is, that you neither of you understand any thing of genuine Christianity. You set out, indeed, as if the whole question in debate related merely to ecclesiastical polity; but it is soon found that the nature of personal religion is inseparably interwoven with it. This connection is sufficiently illustrated by the present writer. But your connected system of ecclesiastical polity and personal religion, is neither that of the Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy, nor that of the New Testament.

How little do you consider, that the first preachers of the gospel, whether the apostles, or their imme-

diate successors, were themselves reconciled to God, and had the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which was given to them, before the word of reconciliation was committed to them. It never enters into your head that they were the pardoned, sworn, and loyal subjects of the King of kings, whose returning reign they proclaimed, and in whose name they published pardon to the rebellious children of men. You seem to be utterly ignorant, that in publishing the royal proclamation, they absolutely insisted that the rebels should lay down their arms, renounce the principles of their rebellion, abjure the tyrannical usurper, the prince of the power of the air, render allegiance to the God of heaven, and sue for their pardon only through the mediation and atonement of Jesus Christ : and to signify all this by their baptism. You never learned that they assured the returning rebels of the mission of an ambassador extraordinary ; who by the seal of Heaven should ratify the covenant of peace to those by whom it was thus accepted. It has not entered into your calculation, that God condescends to dwell among a pardoned and loyal people, as their governor and protector : or that he reigns in their hearts, while he writes there the law of love to himself and to each other. Nor could you perceive that an ambassador for God, is called upon to warn the new recruits of their continual danger from hostile legions,

And arm'd himself in panoply complete
Of heav'ly temper, furnishes with arms,
Bright as his own, and trains, by ev'ry rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God's elect.

And what have you substituted for such a ministration of the glorious gospel of the kingdom of God ? Instead of going back to learn how the divine embassy was executed by the first heralds of peace, you have taken your model entirely from the revolted and rebellious city of popish Rome. According to you, a man may be an ambassador for God while he is himself an enemy and a rebel. He may live in friendship with the world, which is to be an enemy of God,—he may be governed by the carnal mind,

which is enmity to God,—he may be under the power of the devil, and serve the arch-rebel,—and yet, if he can obtain authority from one who, under the same circumstances, has a pretended authority, not derived from God, except through a number of ambassadors who have actually forsaken God and gone over to the enemy, he may execute with advantage the embassy of the Most High. No wonder if, in such a case, he utterly misapprehend the nature of his undertaking. Instead of urging the rebellious sons of men to seek and accept reconciliation on the terms and in the manner which the divine embassy requires, he has a method of confirming to them the covenant of peace independent on their submission or allegiance, without their acceptance of reconciliation, or their seeking it through the proper mediator: and which supersedes the necessity of God's sealing the covenant by the mission of his Holy Spirit. Thus, in spite of all their high pretensions, the rebels remain enemies, with a persuasion that God is at peace with them, though he does not dwell among them. They expect to reign with him, though he does not reign in them, or write his law on their hearts: and become secure of partaking the kingdom, without fighting the good fight. If this is not to heal the wound of the daughter of God's people slightly, and to say peace, peace, when there is no peace, I confess I do not understand it. It was thus, the Romish priests, when they had evaporated the power of godliness, magnified the form of it: and being deceived themselves, deceived the whole earth with their sorceries. Strangers to that personal holiness which always becometh the house of God, they substituted an imaginary power of administering valid sacraments, and promised their people liberty, while they themselves were the servants of corruption. Their "holy religion," without making either the priest or the people holy, is their *palladium*; and "holy church," while she damns the heretics without hope of mercy, undertakes for the salvation of all her members. Such is your prototype! and it must be confessed that you copy it fairly enough. Were there none of the clergy who have more evangelical views, and who "shew the people the way of salvation," your church would be alto-

gether a mere daughter of the whore of Babylon. There is not one of your principles which does not prove your right to the honour which you boast, and which has not led us down again to popery. Your opinions of the uninterrupted succession,—of the design and effects of ordination,—of the holiness of the minister distinguished from personal holiness,—of priestly dignity and power,—of the nature and design of the sacraments, and the dependence of their validity on the power of the priest—of priestly absolution,—of the church,—of salvation in the church and damnation out of it,—of the authority of civil magistrates,—of liberty of conscience and toleration,—as well as your bigotry, and disposition to persecute,—are all of them mere popery in a thin disguise. We are not in more danger from professed, than from protesting, papists, who cannot develope their own principles without an acknowledgement, like that of your friend and advocate, that if their prince should think the adoption of the popish form of religion to be for the good of his subjects, it is their duty to obey him. Let me, therefore, recommend to you, for the good of my country, for the peace of all true Englishmen, and for the preservation of the church, to seek, with all your party, an asylum in Italy ; where, unmolested by heresy or schism, you will live in dignity and unity, with a church after your own heart : and to leave all true protestants, whether churchmen or dissenters, to enjoy the blessings of that vital religion, for which martyrs have bled, of which your own church is no contemptible witness, and which, thanks be to God ! still remains in the books of divine revelation.

I remain, REV. SIR, your ready servant in the cause of genuine protestantism and primitive Christianity,

EDWARD HARE.

*Liverpool,
Jan. 6, 1816.*

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